Studies in Contemporary and Historical Archaeology 6

Wild Signs: Graffiti in Archaeology and History

Edited by

Jeff Oliver
Tim Neal

BAR International Series 2074
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Dan Hicks (University of Oxford) and Joshua Pollard (University of Bristol)
Series Editors

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Wild Signs: An Introduction

Jeff Oliver and Tim Neal

The Graffiti Story?

The story of graffiti begins in the battered subways and urine-stained alleys of New York and Philadelphia; at least this is the received wisdom traded on by popular culture. In the 1970s New York was sliding towards fiscal rock bottom: much of the city's infrastructure was crumbling and the knock-on effects were felt particularly by the urban poor, especially among ethnic minorities. It was during this period of uncertainty that a counterculture of daubed and spray painted affirmations began to appear on the city streets with increasing regularity (Addley 2006; Cresswell 1996: 31-32; Hammond 2006). By the mid 1980s most sizable North American and European cities had their own clandestine street art movements, with hybrid 'indigenous' scenes - influenced initially by American and European styles - soon echoed in cities as far away as Brazil and southeast Asia (Addley 2006: 41-42; Manco et al 2005). At the same time that spray-painted tags, throw ups, pieces and murals began to define a new 'low' art of the streets, the post-modern turn ensured that graffiti was also consumed within public and private galleries of 'high' art circles. It was in such surroundings that the likes of Jean Michael Basquiat, aka SAMO, walked a tightrope between the social tensions of the hood and the crass consumerism of the art business (Emmerling 2003).

Judging by the way in which graffiti has been continually appropriated and redeployed, the range of its global diversity betrays its so-called east coast 'roots'. And yet, distinctiveness of form and message continues to stem from a fairly restricted range of social and cultural contexts. Sociological attention has tended to focus on graffiti 'artists' and 'crews' as a narrow interest group of disenfranchised street dwellers or gangs who seek to challenge the political order of the city (Adams and Winter 1997; Grider 1975; Lachmann; 1988; Ley and Cybriwsky 1974; Pray and Gastman 2005). In a similar vein, such lines of questioning have also helped to legitimate an appropriate geographical context in which graffiti is to be expected, that is, a phenomenon almost exclusively tied to socially divisive geography of the modern capitalist city.

If graffiti's colonization of the streets has confirmed its establishment as an artistic tradition among urban 'activists' then the now extensive body of popular literature, both in print and on the internet, has helped to reinforce this claim. The recent trend in glossy coffee table expositions on the lives of contemporary artists and the causes célèbres that inspire their work has elevated the status of graffiti from sidewalk 'vandalism' to a subject worthy of consumption (for recent offerings see Amqvist and Hagelin 2006; Banksy 2006; Cooper and Chalfant 1988; Gantz 2004; Gastman et al 2006; Manco et al 2005). Indeed, the power of the internet has done much to popularize the mass consumption of graffiti well beyond its metropolitan heartlands. Innovative web sites such as *Art Crimes* and *Graffiti Archaeology*, among others, have elevated it from the relative obscurity of freeway underpasses and car parks to a digital centre stage consumed by artists and aficionados alike. Love it or loathe it, popular culture provides the lens through which graffiti should be understood. But is the story of graffiti as straightforward as this?

Wild Signs

Even a hurried survey of the historiography of graffiti reveals a far more complex picture. From Classical Greece and Rome (Lang 1976; Lindsay 1960; Lawrence 1994) to post-Revolutionary France (Sheon 1976) to nineteenth century Puerto Rico (Rivera-Collazo 2006), graffiti adorned the walls of public places. Analysis of the context and form of historical examples is on one level reassuring: their authors dealt in themes not unfamiliar to the 'latrinalia' that have adorned bathroom walls during our own times (Beck 1982), ranging from love and loss to vulgar character assassination. And yet, if the past can at times be curiously familiar, we are also reminded of its ability to surprise. As Fleming (2001: 30) argues, the prohibition against wall writing broadly accepted today was not necessarily shared in Elizabethan England: in this context the line between texts attached to interior walls and texts inscribed on them, was not a hard and fast distinction.

It is in this context of uncertainty – where the past, even the very recent past, has the potential to challenge our expectations – that the current volume takes its impetus. If popular culture has unintentionally tamed graffiti, atomizing the contexts in which it is to be expected, the following chapters provide new forms of evidence and new points of view that both challenge and destabilize received wisdom. Drawing broadly on approaches from anthropology and material culture studies to human geography and cultural history, this book tells the history of people, places and issues through *wild signs*. Largely ignored by archaeologists and historians, the purpose and meaning of wild signs can vary as much as their geographical context. They may mark territory, in an attempt to exclude outsiders, or be invitations

to dialogue. They can be subversive public statements, while others form a closed language for insiders. Depending on their context, wild signs can enshrine a challenge to law and order, while from certain perspectives they may constitute natural law itself. Frequently they operate as signifiers of memory and identity, acknowledging a wider range of actors, times, spaces and concerns, which may not ordinarily be brought into dialogue other than through such inscriptive materializations.

This collection assembles contributions to *Scrawl and Scribe: Writing in the Margins*, a session held at the annual meeting of Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) hosted at the University of Sheffield in 2005. Together, the papers presented here represent a series of original case studies that place graffiti in a range of different historical and cultural contexts: from rural barn yards of North Yorkshire to twenty-first century London and from the seedy sailor haunts of Malta to the upland pastures of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Nevada. In this introduction, we provide an overview of some of the more salient themes that are raised across the chapters that follow. These include, but are not necessarily restricted to graffiti in the 'natural' world, issues of identity and memory, heritage concerns and performance and practice.

Wild Signs out of Town

The degree to which humans have modified and or harnessed the 'natural' world for productive exploits has established itself as an important interdisciplinary focus within the historiography of the modern world (Cronon 1983; Mzozowski 1999; Rackham 2000; Smout et al 2005; Williams 1989). However, not all western engagements with the natural world can be simply defined in terms of 'improvement'. Inscriptive acts can take place in a wide range of environments and serve as reminders that social tensions permeated rural landscapes and 'wilderness' spaces as well. Chapters by Mallea-Olaetxe, McGuire and Oliver and Neal show how people have used 'natural' landscapes in ways that are more concerned with telling stories, a practice that has more comfortably been associated with non-western peoples.

Mallea-Olaetxe investigates the history of Basque sheep herders, not through diaries or other historical texts, but through the thousands of messages, pictures and symbols carved into the bark of aspen forests in the upland areas of Nevada and California. Bringing to light the cultural history of a group almost unknown within the annals of the American West, he not only adds a counterbalance to more simplistic narratives of the 'opening up' of the western interior, but provides a lens through which we are able to sense the aspirations, concerns, loneliness and humour (see also Stein 1989) that partly defined the experience of young Basque men who sought their fortune in one of America's most rugged environments.

Archaeologies of tree carving, however, are not simply the product of interactions in 'exotic' landscapes on the periphery of the western gaze. On the other side of the Atlantic, Oliver and Neal tackle a similar form of intervention, this time in the heartlands of England. Based on tree surveys conducted at a number of sites in Yorkshire and the midlands, they argue that the practice of tree carving can potentially play a central role in our understanding of rural place making. Moving beyond interpretations that see tree carving as a trivial sideline to the way that woodlands and other treed places are used, they suggest an approach that allows us to appreciate the way that tree carving can bring new information to light on the different ways that places and landscape are valued over time.

Of course, even where the evidence of improvement and environmental impact tends to dominate our plotlines, wild signs can have their place in unravelling tensions surrounding access to resources and property rights. In an argument that challenges the very notion that carvings in seemingly 'inappropriate' places should necessarily provide a window upon the voices of the dispossessed, McGuire makes a convincing case for stone inscriptions that speak more about authority, and the status and identity of land owners. Her assessment also provides a sounding board for thinking through such issues as power in relation to the production of forms of 'official graffiti' and the way that compliance can be instigated through forms of governance that operate at a distance to their source (Hermer and Hunt 1996).

Object Agency and Practice

The recognition that meaning cannot be simply reduced to content is a central issue of a number of the chapters presented here. While no longer a contentious position among a majority within the arts and social sciences (e.g. Appadurai 1986; Chilton 1999; Miller 2005; Thrift 2000) it is nevertheless interesting that for many years, social analysis of graffiti was largely limited to treating it as a code to be deciphered (e.g. Gonos et al 1976; Stocker et al 1972). Such positions no longer seem tenable in the context of more recent research that emphasizes the social efficacy of participating in the creation of wild signs: an awareness of whom and what is at stake in its production. At the same time its corollary, writing (or carving or painting), with and in the world of objects, is in itself creative of material meanings that are socially consequential (e.g. Orengo and Robinson 2008; Peteet 1996). This is a position addressed, albeit with varying forms of emphasis, in chapters by Owen, Giles and Giles, and Parno.

Drawing on evidence from Tewkesbury cathedral and comparative observations from other English sites, Owen argues that the commonly observed scratched graphical and textual 'graffiti' appearing within these sacred spaces, should not be seen as graffiti at all in the modern sense of the term. Rather, she argues that such inscriptive acts are much more likely to be unsanctioned devotional offerings, tokens or 'souvenirs' that served to highlight and actively fix the identities of those whose relationships with the church, unlike its powerful patrons, were otherwise fleeting and insubstantial. The centrality of graffiti to the social experience of more marginal actors is also a focus of Giles

and Giles. They persuasively illustrate how writing on the wall of various agricultural out-buildings was absolutely central to the social construction and realization of a particular group of farm labourers – the horselads. Their study focuses on the Yorkshire Wolds during the early twentieth century, a period of significant agrarian change. Their analysis touches on a range of issues from gender, social status, and spatial relationships. A central argument forms around the idea that the ability to engage in particular forms of wall painting, often in front of an audience, was a critical means through which the horselads expressed relational identities within the group but also issues such as what it meant to be a young male in a time of transformation in rural England.

Working with the understanding that material culture has both an original intended meaning and a life of its own is a critical element of post-modern historical and archaeological research. The paradox of the static form being both a representation and an active participant has become a central tenet in contemporary material culture studies. In Parno's chapter, these ideas are developed around a number of different themes. In particular his discussion of social space is particularly pertinent. In this context, surveys of graffiti at a number of sites in Bristol are seen to be both heaping public space with particular meanings, while at the same time eroding it of others, providing the public gaze with different forms of mnemonic potency.

Heritage and Temporality

Another important theme is the issue of wild signs as heritage; signs of past social action that may gain new forms of resonance in the present world. 'Wild signs' can be said to exist within a spectrum, from acts that deliberately set out to recreate the meaning of places, such as public works of art, to acts where intention is less formalized and improvisational. But at what point does an act often associated with criminality and the defacement of private property become a legitimate focus of historical enquiry? Furthermore how should such acts, which we prefer to forget in more sanctioned narratives, be used to inform and assess popular perceptions? These are difficult questions, but with the widening of definitions of heritage in recent years it is nevertheless something that we need to take seriously (e.g. Palus and Matthews 2007). As Schofield's and Silva's chapters show, these questions are particularly poignant when dealing with marginalized groups, such as prostitutes, immigrants or the rural working poor. But at the same time, as argued by Cowdell, graffiti can also provide a sounding board for thinking about changes in broader attitudes to more abstract issues.

Querying attitudes towards street art, Schofield asks the question: what precisely distinguishes prehistoric cave paintings and similar forms of ancient 'art' from contemporary graffiti? And why should the archaeological investigation of such activity be any less legitimate than the study of prehistoric 'art' forms? Drawing from three separate pieces of field research on graffiti from Strait Street in Valleta, Malta; Bempton Radar Station, Yorkshire; and a peace camp in Nevada, Schofield argues that although others may deem it to be little more than criminal activity, wild signs can help to flesh out both 'official' and 'unofficial' histories, a point well worth remembering if we are to bridge both local narratives and grander discourses.

A concern with the local within the context of broader social processes is also an important issue for Silva's contribution, where he touches on the way that graffiti practice in Portugal is embedded within the historical contours of Portuguese history. Silva makes the eloquent point that graffiti has been an inextricable part of political conflicts from the reign of Salazar in the mid twentieth century to the triumphalism of globalization. He argues that while recent content is influenced by North American styles and themes, he shows how graffiti has been taken up by a range of actors, not all of which can be easily pigeon-holed as the work of the usual suspects. If this is indeed the case, then there is a strong argument for what these features contribute to mainstream history, a viewpoint that chimes in well with Schofield's belief that the heritage sector needs to focus more attention on what others may see as an 'ephemeral' category of material culture.

How graffiti provides a prompt for understanding different attitudes in society is also a central concern for Cowdell. Rather than focusing exclusively on the materiality of graffiti, he uses the graffiti artist Banksy's rat depictions as a prism to explore the contours of rat lore in British history. While certain perceptions of the rat seem to hold across time and space, he draws attention to a significant amount of ambiguity in how rats are perceived. As symbols of urban life with dominant themes of degradation but also resistance, Cowdell finds a metaphorical quality in the rat that all urban dwellers can both celebrate and mock. Unlike the individualism expressed by much graffiti, Banksy's graphic representations of the rat act as touchstones of urban experience, which resonate broadly through this social landscape (see also Klingman and Shalev 2001).

* * * *

Addressing some of the common themes touched on throughout, Buchli provides an afterword that argues for an emphasis on the materiality of graffiti and other wild signs as a central component of any research endeavour attempting to come to grips with the social dynamics and impact of such activity. However, he also notes that archaeological and heritage interventions are not themselves detached from the social efficacy of wild signs; indeed they tend to have something of an incongruous effect. The goals of documentation and preservation can, paradoxically, have a limiting effect on the fluid and dialogical dimensions of inscriptive practices, and yet, such valorisations also play an important role in highlighting and legitimizing wild signs, enabling and amplifying their power within previously unimagined social arenas.

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Basque Aspen Carvings: The Biggest Little Secret of Western USA

Joxe Mallea-Olaetxe

How easily we forget that white-bark and smooth-skinned trees such as aspen, beech, and alder – by virtue of standing – have inspired and invited humans since the earliest times to carve them. Hardly anyone thinks that trees were the first writing medium, indeed, thousands of years ago during the Palaeolithic people began painting and carving in caves. When the ancestors of the Basques hunters armed with spears wandered through the forest of Western Europe, they probably left their markings on conspicuous trees; after all, carving a tree is a lot easier than painting or carving on a rock wall. They did it to capture the image of the animal they were chasing, to mark the boundaries of their particular band or tribe, or simply to mark the presence of their identity: someone named *otso* (wolf, in Basque) may have tried to carve the figure of a wolf, and one named *hartz* (bear) may have carved a bear, and so forth.

Tree carving has been, and still is, a common activity, and although writing on paper may have overshadowed it in recent times, it is highly unlikely that the latter will outlast the former. Roman writer Ovid told us that lovers carved their names on trees, and that still has not changed today. In 1805, after trekking half of the American continent, explorers Lewis and Clark reached the Pacific Ocean near the mouth of the Columbia River. To celebrate the event, one of the first things Clark did was to carve his name on an alder tree and date it—and it was not the only time he did this—and others in his party proceeded to imitate him. Two centuries earlier in New Mexico, Adelantado Juan Oñate, a Mexican whose father was born in the Basque Country, carved on a rock the story of his journey and settlement of the land. Centuries later, a sheepherder in California, arriving at the end of his trail, would have done the same thing. In fact, thousands of Basque and other sheepherders carved hundreds of thousands of trees in the American West from the 1850s to the 1970s, and during the course of my eighteen-year research, I have recorded over 27,000 tree carvings.

One of the most important issues that affects tree carving is the availability of suitable trees. People carve because the exercise is pleasant and relatively easy. In the western United States, pines are more abundant than other trees, so why are they not carved? The answer is simple. In order to carve on a pine tree, you first have to shave its thick, rough bark, and that takes time and a little sweat, which is the reason why one finds few glyphs on conifers.

Background

In the American West, a small number of immigrants from the western Pyrenees Mountains were responsible for creating a tree-carving phenomenon that is probably unique in the entire world. The young Basque men who immigrated to the American West as sheepherders were not professional carvers or wood-workers, but rather they found themselves displaced from their homeland, alone in the mountains, with leisure time, and a pocketknife. More importantly, aspens grow in abundance above 1500 meters of elevation, and their smooth white bark is almost irresistible to carvers. By American West, I mean primarily the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming, where a few decades back millions of sheep dotted the landscape. Sheep require a herder, so it was the happy coincidence of aspens, immigrant young men, and idle time that contributed to the creation and development of a one-of-a-kind literature called *arborglyphs, silvaglyphs*, *dendroglyphs*, or just aspen carvings.

Arborglyphs may be best described as the sheepherder's self-written and self-published autobiography (to be sure, a very short and abridged one), consisting mostly of names, dates, and regional origins in Europe, followed by comments on their lives. As many as half a million arborglyphs existed in the American landscape for over 150 years (one official of the Bureau of Land Management estimated one million), and their remote location proved to be an obstacle for their recognition as a historical resource. The fact that the herders/carvers were immigrants and members of minority groups, mostly Basques, with a sprinkling of Hispanic Americans, Irish, Mexicans, and Spaniards and Frenchmen from regions contiguous to Euskal Herria (the Basque Country) meant that their stories rarely surfaced in American history. Traditional American history, aimed at the Anglo-European world and catered to the East, showed less interest in the West, and almost no curiosity for immigrants, much less sheepherders.

Further realities contributed to the demise of the majority of the arborglyphs before anyone could record them. First, on average aspens may live eighty to ninety years; they grow quickly and live relatively short life spans. Secondly, they are located in remote areas; a century ago, only a few logging roads connected 'civilization' to the high country where the herders stayed from late June until October. Their

2.1 'Pablo Urruta 1950 Julio 1'.

only companions were the sheep, the horse or donkey, and two or three dogs. The camptender brought supplies to the herders once a week or every ten days, but he could only stay with the herder for a few hours before returning to the distant main camp. Occasionally, the herder might see a few hunters or an outdoors person, but certainly no historians or journalists, for whom sheepherding and aspen carvings were unknown entities.

Vast Public Lands Full of Messages

Europeans may have difficulty comprehending the huge

public territories in the western United States that are managed by federal agencies. The State of Nevada, for example, is approximately 640 km wide and 880 km long, and 85 percent of it is publically owned. Nationally, two large federal agencies manage these public lands—the Forest Service (FS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The former was created in 1905 and the latter in 1934, and their task was to protect the nation's land, water, timber, and range. By virtue of their mission, they controlled access to public lands, thus directly affecting the sheep industry and the economic activities of the Basques. In general, federal policy tended to curtail access to federal reserved areas, which combined with the Great Depression of the 1930s, followed by a decline in Basque immigration in the 1970s proved detrimental to the sheep industry. Tree carving and sheep-herding activities closely paralleled each other.

Some FS and BLM archaeologists and historians must have been aware of the existence of the arborglyphs, but for decades, they did little or nothing to learn about their nature and significance. Rather, they often regarded them as a nuisance, graffiti, tree vandalism, and—their favourite—pornography[1]. One cannot blame the feds too much, because the carvings are often difficult to read, moreover also almost everything carved was in languages they did not understand. However, over 90 percent of the carvings contain at least a first name, last name or both, and almost as many contain a date as well (Figure 2.1). Therefore, we may ask, how difficult was it to work out the meaning of *Jose Mendibe 1904*, or *Juan Erro 1891*, or *Pierre Ernaga 1928,* or *Jean Biscay 1957*?

Some hikers and outdoorsmen saw the carvings and found the artwork different and intriguing, so they took photographs of the most outstanding arborglyphs and published short articles in small periodicals or the local newspaper. There was no pretension of scholarly work, because the main attraction was photos consisting usually of 'picassoesque' human and animal figures. Since the 1960s, several dozen such articles have appeared in areas of the western states with Basque populations, places like Salt Lake City (Utah), Reno (Nevada), San Francisco and Bakersfield (California), but ironically none of the authors were Basque[2]. The forgotten sheepherders had bequeathed America a unique ethnohistoric legacy, yet, I know of not one Basque who by the 1960s, or even later, had recognized their significance and had embarked in the systematic study of the carvings. Furthermore, this neglect becomes more incomprehensible, considering that by 1960 the University of Nevada in Reno had a Basque Studies Program that was studying and publishing on the sheepherders.

A partial explanation for this is that the sheepherders themselves did not take their glyphs seriously, or were not aware of how they might have been of interest to academia. In fact, when in 1989 I started asking them questions, all that they could say to me was 'don't look at them'. More importantly, we are dealing with a profound linguistic and cultural challenge. In order to read and understand correctly the glyphs, the researcher must understand colloquial, and mostly unwritten, peasant Euskara (Basque language) and several of its dialects, plus Spanish and French as spoken in the Basque Country. For example, if the name of a herder is Olea, it is very probable that the carver was Bizkaian from the western part of the Basque Country. If under his name was found the word 'tranpa' (tramp) carved in a different style, it could be safely assumed that its author was probably not Bizkaian and that the carving exemplified typical regional competition, or even antagonism. If the surname was Ocafrain (spelled with 'c' instead of 'ç') it could be assumed the author was from Iparralde (the north side of the Pyrenees). Echevarria denotes Bizkaian origin and Echeverria indicates Gipuzkoan, and more probably Navarrese (because there were very few herders from Gipuzkoa), and so on. The regional origins of many Basque surnames can usually be traced to a specific valley, allowing us to determine the immigration patterns from one village in the Pyrenees to one particular sheep company range in California, Nevada, and so on[3].

There is a wealth of information inherent to the arborglyphs still waiting to be analyzed. Despite the handicaps and the decades of total neglect, the secret of the arborglyphs was simply too big and too widespread to remain secret forever, and slowly the secrets hidden in the mountains for so long, began to be revealed.

Breaking the Ethnic Barriers

By the 1960s, the Basque community had become much more visible, especially in California, Idaho, and Nevada. Across the West, the sheep industry was waning, and many ex-sheepherders were either returning home to Europe or settling down in U.S. cities and towns. As a way of asserting their new visibility, in 1959 the Basque colony in northwest Nevada staged a highly successful festival in Sparks, Nevada, attended by over 10,000 people, half of them Basques from all corners of the American West. Although Paul Laxalt, son of Basque immigrants, was elected Nevada's governor in 1966 and later U.S. senator, his brother, Robert Laxalt, may have started the mini-cultural revolution. In 1957, he put the Basques on the map with his highly successful *Sweet Promised Land*, a story about his father Dominique, a sheepherder, returning to the Old Country after an absence of many decades[4].

Around this time period, a few pioneering federal archaeologists, falling into step with the changing political and social realities of the period, began recording some of the most obvious carvings in their districts. They did it in order to comply with new environmental laws and

[1] On 3 March, 2008 Jason Blevins ('Aspens hold fading tales of loneliness') reported in The Denver Post, that Angie Krall, archaeologist for the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest was compiling data for a book on 'aspen erotica'.

[2] See pages 3-5 and the bibliography in J. Mallea-Olaetxe 2000. *Speaking Through the Aspens: Basque Tree Carvings in California and Nevada.* Reno: University of Nevada Press.

[3] The Basques call their country Euskal Herria, which is made up of seven historic regions: Nafarroa (Navarre), Behenafarroa (Lower Navarre), Xiberua, Lapurdi, Gipuzkoa, Araba, and Bizkai.

[4] Robert Laxalt 1957. *Sweet Promised Land.* New York: Harper.

2.2 The cities of Reno-Sparks, Nevada, as seen from a nearby sheep range.

National Register rules governing historic resources. It was a piecemeal operation but a start nevertheless. Two more decades would pass and the aspens, being fragile and ephemeral, continued tumbling to the ground by the thousands. Once on the ground, the bark with the carvings quickly deteriorates and disintegrates. Climatic changes and the general drought trend across the West may have accelerated the loss of aspen trees, which require significant amounts of moisture to survive. It was finally in the late 1980s that a systematic study began at the Basque Studies Program in Reno, but interestingly the State of Nevada Office of Historic Preservation, FS and BLM archaeologists, and the Basque Government in Europe became the more enthusiastic sponsors of the research.

Transhumance

Tree carving is a natural exercise of sheepherders and people who spend a great deal of time in the wilderness. The sheepherders in northern Mexico certainly began carving arborglyphs in colonial times, and from there it expanded into Arizona, California, and New Mexico, which today lie in the United States. Native Americans were already carving rocks and trees, such as the so-called 'Witness Trees', especially in southeast USA. It was after 1848 and the discovery of gold in California when the Basques began to concentrate on sheepherding, and it was probably during this period that they started finding tree carvings left behind by earlier writers. Whenever they located them, they learned about fellow herders who had preceded them; they laughed at the humorous messages or figures, and obeying a powerful ethnic of solidarity, they upheld the tradition by carving their own messages (Basques are well known for their love of tradition).

By following the trail of the carvings on the range, we can track the paths taken by the sheepherders year after year. The annual ritual of moving the sheep into the low valleys for the winter and to the high country for the summer months is known as *transhumance.* Naturally, the herder did not deviate much from these trails unless he had to—for instance in needing to round up stray animals or to fetch water. The herder was constantly on the move between the low and high country (Figure 2.2); everyday he covered between five and ten miles, depending on the terrain. The Basques called this period *trelin* (on the trail) by borrowing the word *trail* that they learned from American sheepmen. While 'trelin', there were campsites dispersed on the range where the herder could spend one or several nights. They always contained a fire pit, although these are not always easily discernable. Nevertheless, one can still find and identify the camps today by the abundance of nearby carvings. The herder recorded his passing through the range by carving the most visible aspens or those near

2.3 'Hi Justo Sarria Hemen hitzak hunak'.

the trail, which subsequent herders were likely to see and read (and carve in turn). For the herders many of these trail trees served the same function as the billboards in town, to announce messages or to flag up their presence for others, usually in the form of a name or a self-portrait. The end of the trail was always eventful and the date worth recording. That detail by itself revealed something about the condition of the range. For example, if the snowfall that winter had been heavy, the arrival date to the high country would be later than usual.

Arborglyph Topics

The herders did most of their serious carving in the high country, after they arrived in the main campsite and the sheep were scattered across the lush alpine meadows. It was at this time that the herder began to enjoy the idle hours of the summer; when he could let his imagination run loose about his solitary life: the unlucky decision he had made to come to such a 'damn place', with 'damn sheep', 'damn coyotes', the 'fuckin' Sierra', and the camptender who was a 'bastard'. The thought of his family back home and the girlfriend he had left behind in Europe were matters to carve about, but perhaps, he more often reminisced about the fleeting minutes with the prostitute he had visited during his last foray into town. Pondering about the boss who may have been mean or fair but never paid enough was a given, and the matter of the dollars accumulated or spent was a priority topic in everyone's mind, but few revealed the details.

The sheepherder touched on a wide variety of topics, from politics to religion, to weather, to 'not having time to write' (carve). About 90 percent of the carvings contain a name or a surname or both, as well as a date, usually in the form of a year (Figure 2.3). Though it is rarely stated in so many words, the herder's apparent intention and preoccupation was to leave behind proof of his visit to America. At times the herder must have felt like a lord of the land and carved his name on trees, not entirely different from the miner staking a claim. Call it the 'Gilroy was here' syndrome, but the Basque carvings are more historically relevant, as well as pregnant with humanity. It almost seems as if the herder suspected that no one in America knew or cared about him, his identity, or his job. After a few years, when the herder had returned home, few, if any would recall their contribution to the local economy by doing his best to grow fat lambs for the rancher, who in turn could afford to have a better life and to send his children to college.

This aspect of the sheepherder's suspicion that his work was not appreciated holds relevancy in more recent times. We are not talking about the 1920s, before Social Security was enacted, but about the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s when many sheepherders saw Social Security payments deducted from their paychecks. Later they would learn that sheep ranchers commonly failed to forward the money to the government; instead they simply kept it, unbeknownst to the sheepherders, who today find themselves unable to draw benefits from those years of work. Such exploitation persisted because the immigrant bound for the range lands

rarely spoke English and were often ignorant of American laws and culture. But at least the sheepherder could, and did, leave behind proof of his years on the range, and the aspens are still his witnesses standing tall.

When I started this research in the late 1980s, I thought that the trees provided sketchy information on the lives of the herders, or even that the information was repetitious. A historian of course is seldom satisfied with the sources, that is, he always wants more, as I did. Nevertheless, considering the circumstances that a knife is not a pen and that a tree is not a sheet of paper, I should not complain. Arborglyphs actually provide two fundamental forms of data on which all history is dependent on, a name and a date. There were herders who tried to carve large amounts of information on aspen trunks, but they tended to inscribe the letters too tightly together, and within a decade or two, as the tree grew and the girth expanded, they became indecipherable.

After names and dates, the second most frequent carving topic is, naturally, sheepherding. This theme is entangled with other subtopics, from loneliness to drought, to news on the weight of the lambs, and such. As stationary features, they can tell us precisely where the sheepherder and his sheep were on a specific date. Since there are thousands of such glyphs, in many cases they can assist our understanding of how sheep herding has impacted the natural environment, particularly the native flora.

No one knew the range and its condition as well as the sheepherder. The government databases might state that the year 1910 was a drought year in California, but the sheepherder's carvings will inform us about pasture in a specific drainage or canyon, for example on July 31, 1910. Of course, more interesting are the frustrations, the good days, and the bad days to which the carved messages refer. For example, 'Damn, I am not worth five cents as a sheepherder, but I have to stay, because I cannot do anything else, damn, amen, 12 August 1917'. It turns out that this particular fellow was somewhat crippled, a serious handicap to make a living in such a rough terrain. Basques are keen on pride and competition, and it took guts to write and sign such a statement. Another fellow carved that he usually lost too many sheep and yet his boss paid him enough, which did not stop him from praying to Jesus that He intervene to raise the wages.

Most herders carved more on days when things went badly than when all was well. During these trying times, expletives flew across the meadows against the sheep, the camptender, the dogs, or the burro that ran away with the pack and everything the herder owned. The burro is another unsung hero of the range, very smart, who never makes the same mistake twice. The newly arrived herder, naturally, did not know the first thing about the trails and the camps, so the boss would give him the oldest burro in the outfit with the simple instruction to follow it. The old burro would guide the initiate through the trails, taking him unerringly into camp every time.

Although the frequency of erotic or sexual glyphs is less than five percent of the total recorded carvings, some people continue to equate aspen carvings with pornography. Such knee-jerk reactions have much to do with particular American views on sexuality. Truth be told, the sheepherders were not pornographers; indeed, most of them were ignorant of the term. More accurately, they were simply young, healthy, and sexually frustrated, fantasizing about the women they lacked and attempting to minimize the omnipresent loneliness of the range. Though infrequent in numbers, this topic is culturally significant, because many herders arrived in America in their late teens or early twenties. Thus, many were sexually inexperienced, in large part because the European Basque clergy placed taboos on sexual expression. It is no wonder that I found carvings such as these: *Joder es bueno* (To fuck is good) dated to 1896 and 1898, and dozen similar ones. A more recent herder carved *Fokys good for evry pipol*, which is a phonetic-English spelling for 'To fuck is good for every people'. These kinds of messages seem to indicate that some sheepherders were sexually initiated in America, often in the brothels of Nevada, where they discovered that sex 'was good'. Another herder, having read a similar message on a tree, added the following comment, 'Yeah, women and wine are both good, but they are hard on your pocketbook'. This was a reminder to fellow herders that they had chosen to come to America and live a harsh existence for one purpose only, to make money and then return home.

A further interesting question is why the majority of carved women are portrayed without arms, and sometimes without head and feet? My assessment is that arms were difficult to draw, and, more importantly, they obstructed the view of the body's curvature, which they always exaggerated, presumably for erotic effect (Figure 2.4).

Many carvings are expressions of individuals living in a liminal rarefied state; the herders were physically in America, but emotionally attached to their hometowns. In the U.S. they spent little time in town, so the only thing they knew about the country were the sheep, the open range, and the mountains—no human contact—which was a depressing experience for many. In order to overcome these tensions, they resorted to humour and many carving reflect this joviality. One way to accomplish this was to carve 'Hurrah for me' messages, to hail their countries and regions, and to carve amusing figures or messages. While this strategy may have worked for many, western American literature also contains stories of the 'sagebrushed' sheepherder gone crazy after spending too many years alone in the mountains.

Of particular interest is how many Navarrese herders carved on July 7, the first day of the world-famous-bull runs in Iruñea (Pamplona). The typical message on that day might read, 'My friends over there are drinking and having fun with the ladies, and I am here with the sheep'. Or, 'Today is a holiday in my hometown; I wonder who my girlfriend is dancing with'. But the most common carving on this day was 'Viva San Fermin' (Long live St. Fermin), the patron saint in whose honour the bulls run through the streets of Old Iruñea, and people from many nationalities embark on

2.4 Figure of a woman.

week-long festivities of non-stop drinking, dancing, and merrymaking.

Sometimes the infrequent mail brought bad news to the solitary herder, such as the death of a mother or father, and carving about these events were simply a way for them to grieve. Other ways to cure boredom was to talk to the dogs and the donkey, or to start singing, whistling, or singing *bertsoak* (improvised poetic verses), which were common in past times among Basques peasants.

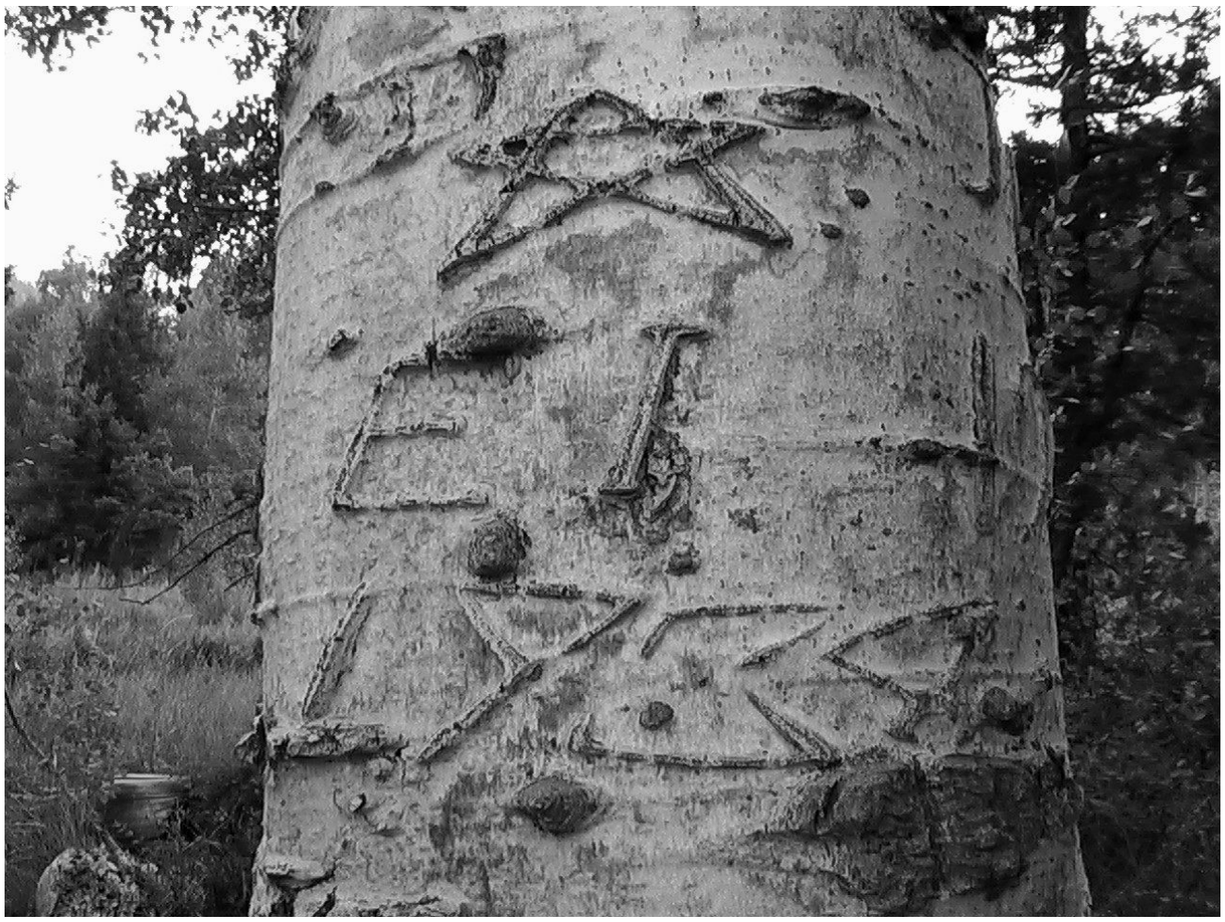
A handful of herders carved long messages (the longest found so far contains over sixty-five words), but that is highly unusual. If the tree was large with an exceptionally clean trunk, it might contain more than one carving. There are aspens bearing four and five glyphs by different carvers, and the reason might be that the oldest message was controversial and other herders were provoked to add a commentary next to it. More frequently, however, herders from the same town tended to carve on the same or nearby tree as a show of solidarity.

There is no doubt that a few herders had artistic talent for carving classic calligraphic initials, curvaceous female figures, and realistic animals, and they influenced others to carve and imitate them. Other figures are reminiscent of the American 'naïve' style and the so-called *picassoesque.* Some carvings are unrecognizable symbols and figures, and I often wonder why they carved so many stars (Figure 2.5). What was their meaning? One individual alone carved seventy-one stars in a single canyon. This same fellow carved forty-seven hearts, which is quite unusual. Unlike the prevalent lover's glyph, with names separated by a arrow pierced heart, Basque sheepherders did not carve such designs[5].

Appraising the Phenomenon

The tens of thousands of arborglyphs still clinging to the aspen trunks in ten or more states of the American West constitute the most democratic history ever written. There were no censors looking over the carver's shoulder, no publisher dictating rules. The great outdoors was oppressive, and ironically, to the sheepherder it felt like prison, but it gave him complete freedom of expression as well. Some might note that it was befitting that the most democratic history should be written in the U.S., a nation that boasts its democratic spirit. To this I would add that the Basques preserve the truest democratic character by the

[5] With the proliferation of 4 x 4 vehicles and access roads to the high country, non-sheepherders today are carving more than ever. However, their glyphs comprise a different category, and furthermore, most of these become unreadable in a few years. Whereas hikers and campers spend little time in the wilderness and even less at carving, sheepherders learned to carve from each other and had time to hone their skills.



2.5 '(Star) E I 1934'.

very fact that throughout their history they rejected the idea of kings and supreme rulers, whom they regarded as agents of infringement, taxes, and absolutism.

For over a century this 'democratic history', a unique American resource, remained off radar most, including federal land stewards as well as historians, and consequently the great majority of the arborglyphs disappeared before anyone recorded them. How did this happen? Were they not interesting enough? Accustomed to the paper medium of documents and to modern drama, sex, and violence in everything they read, city people perhaps found the carved literature of the herders naïve and simplistic: they were not mathematical formulae for building space rockets, nor did they provide political intrigue about the governor's mansion in Sacramento, California

Conventional historians do not think much of the carvings. In fact, they do not even mention the quarrels and shoot-outs with cowboys: the mainstay of many Hollywood movies about range wars of the Old West. There are sexual themes in the carvings, but invariably less than some people think. Naturally, trees yield—as we have seen—very credible insights on the real life of the sheepherder beginning by the late 1880s to the present. First and foremost, the aspens stand as witnesses to the identity and the passing of the herders, and they also offer a complementary view of the history of local ranching and sheep families whose names are still marked on trees.

I first saw arborglyphs in 1968 in northeastern Nevada while on horseback at 2800 meters of elevation. I asked the camptender who accompanied me what they were: 'oh, nothing, sheepherders carve them,' was his answer, and I let go it at that. Exactly twenty years later, I rediscovered them near Stead, Nevada, where I lived and then started to record them in earnest. The vast majority of my data comes from Nevada and California, and to a lesser degree from Idaho and Oregon, but I also received evidence from Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah.

Management is the primary concern of federal land agencies, because that is their mission, but they have yet to formulate a practical and unified plan to manage the arborglyphs under their care, and they still have to decide if the arborglyphs—one tree or one grove or the entire phenomenon—are eligible for the National Register[6]. Most of the ranger districts I know keep their arborglyph paper records in boxes that researchers do not even know exist. In the future we can hope that this data will be eventually digitized and entered into a computer database such as the

[6] The National Register of Historic Places was established in 1966 to protect built structures and other artifacts over fifty years old that are worthy of preservation.

one I have recently created for a Legacy Project of the U.S. Department of Defense. The database contains the precise message, its translation, and a commentary whenever needed. It also contains one or more high resolution photographs of the glyph, to which video recordings will also be added (I use video for recording purposes). To date, the database contains over 13,000 entries, which may seem like a lot, but we have just begun to scratch the sheepherder landscape[7].

So, how do we evaluate the arborglyphs of the American West? They certainly stand alone and as such a unique resource they should be eligible and protected under the rules of the National Register. In the states of Nevada and Idaho one will see bumper stickers—usually on dusty pickups—that claim sheepherding to be 'The Second Oldest Profession in the World'. By profession, it is understood that the industry provides people with wool, lamb, and mutton, to which now we can add their carved literature.

Sheepherder 'signs' are not easily classified; they are not a trivial form of writing, but quite to the contrary. They are central to the history of sheepherding, which was a hugely important part of the settler history of the American West. Many people might regard them as 'wild signs', but I would argue that rather they are 'signs in the wilderness'. After all these years, after aficionados and researchers—myself included—hiked the wild canyons looking for aspen carvings, after all the recordings thus far, it is still true today that trees are our best source for the real sheepherder history. But time is our enemy. The longer we wait to study them, the fewer older aspens will be left standing, and the more difficult it will be to read their carvings. We were late to record them, and little is being done to document their disappearing messages. As we speak, hundreds of aspens tumble to the ground and with them history disintegrates into dust. According to a Nevada BLM supervisor, during the heydays of the sheep industry the number of the carved trees in the U.S. could easily have exceeded a million. Nobody knows for sure, but 'The Biggest Little Secret of the American West' could be an understatement.

A Rare Encounter

I would like to conclude by providing an idea of how widespread the carving phenomenon is, even though the Basque world remains small. In 2005, I attended the Third World Congress of Sheepherders in Arantzazu (Basque Country), where I met a number of older men who had herded sheep in America. One of them introduced himself by saying that he worked many years in eastern Nevada. I am familiar with the geography of Nevada, so I had to ask him the question:

> 'Where exactly did you work?'
>
> 'In Cherry Creek,' he answered.
>
> 'Oh, Cherry Creek; did you carve any trees there?'
>
> 'Oh, yeah, lots of them'.
>
> 'What is your last name?' I asked, curious now, because I remembered recording over eight hundred arborglyphs in Cherry Creek.
>
> 'My name is J. P. Urrikariet'.
>
> 'Urrikariet . . .of course. I have seen it; in fact, I have a video of it'.
>
> 'I cannot believe it,' said the ex-herder, his face all lit up with excitement.
>
> 'Well, it is true,' I said.

I don't think he really believed me until I started sharing with him some details, such as the names of fellow herders I recorded in the same mountain range and the names of sheep companies that operated in the area during his herding stint. Both of us were deeply touched by the unexpected encounter that in an instant had brought together two very different places and narratives five thousand miles apart. The old herder could not imagine that anyone had seen his name and recorded his carving located in a god-forsaken canyon of the Nevada wilderness. In turn, I was thrilled to be facing and talking with the real herder, who decades earlier left in America an ephemeral proof of his passing. Because of it, now his place in history was secure.

[7] Recently, the Getchell Library of the University of Nevada, Reno, developed a web site on Nevada sheepherders (go to 'Northern Nevada Sheepherders'), which also contains a database with about 500 entries.

Elbow Grease and Time to Spare: The Place of Tree Carving

Jeff Oliver and Tim Neal

Introduction

A busy B road north of Sheffield may seem an unlikely place to appreciate an archaeological landscape. There are no obvious signs of antiquity here, and yet the patient observer may be rewarded. North of the village of Grenoside on the shoulder of a noisy strip of asphalt running east of Wharncliffe Woods is a long border of some fifty mature beech trees. Historical evidence in the form of ordnance survey maps suggests that they were planted in the nineteenth century, more than likely to 'improve' the view. But they provide more than just an attractive frame for an old road, the trees form a continuous mural of carvings strung out along the route for all to see. Deeply incised into their stretched silvery bark are clusters of blocky writing that depict first or last names and date marks from the early decades of the twentieth century through to the late 1950s. It would be difficult to trace the individual authors of these deliberate marks, yet despite their anonymity they provide clues that tell us something of the changing history of this place, something not easily recognisable in other ways.

When the majority of the carvings were made, the car was still a luxury, public transport was limited – except in the city – and local journeys were still commonly made by foot, as happened throughout Britain more generally. Considering how traffic speeds through this landscape today, and the fact that inscriptions have not been fashioned here for half a century, what's most immediately telling about this place is its former pace of life. From the privileged view of hindsight, the names and dates seem to suggest a form of intimacy with this landscape that stands in marked contrast to the detached experience of today's travellers who whiz by in their cars. The act of tree carving is not at all like the hurried penmanship of a writer or the airbrush strokes of the urban graffiti tagger, it requires a good knife, a bit of elbow grease, and time to spare. The carvings speak of less hurried engagements with place, of quarrymen or agricultural labourers on their walk to work, of soldiers marking their presence on their way to war, or local people punctuating their journey to or from the Grenoside pubs: they speak of lingering presences. To an archaeologist, these marks provide an important record about the character of daily journeys almost one hundred years ago - they serve to populate this now deserted roadside.

* * * *

Written words, signs and symbols are an inescapable part of everyday life. Controlled by the apparatus of the state, by the literati, or by God, they can seem to take on an institutional, structuring and regulating role in the production and reproduction of society and culture – in effect shaping a discourse of the status quo (Collins 1995; Harley 1992; Moreland 2000). It should be no surprise, therefore, that in attempting to piece together the fragments of the past, historians, archaeologists and others traditionally reached for those artefacts produced by those in the 'know', which offered assurances about expected forms of decorum, belief, and composure. For example, medieval church paintings and bas-relief carvings provided allegorical cues for worshipers on matters of morality vis-à-vis theological strictures (Camille 2000; Giles 2007); the printed word, mass produced charts and travel literature in nineteenth century Europe helped to create expectations about the 'wilderness' and 'wastes' of North America and Australia before emigrants ever stepped foot on these 'empty' lands (Carter 1987; Clayton 2000); while the invasive regulatory signs such as prohibitions, warnings, advisories and instruction that clutter the modern landscape of cites and towns provide indications about strategies deployed in the sociology of governance (Hermer and Hunt 1996). If such forms of social control at times seem to provide answers that are all too easy, if not at times tautological, what about inscriptions that are not part of more established conventions or that blatantly disobey the rules? What about graffiti?

In a changing academic environment that now views agency to be at least as important as structure, archaeologists and others have begun to turn their attention away from symbols of authority and towards the daubed, painted and scratched writings of the disadvantaged, the excluded or the subversive in society. Graffiti itself is often considered to be a symptom of urban decay, a visual contagion of modern times that infects the ordered character of our cities and towns. Many find it unsightly or threatening, but it can also tell us something about the character of places and the lives of forgotten voices from the recent or distant past. Because it can be found from many periods and places, wherever people felt a desire to voice opinions – from Roman Pompeii to twenty-first century London – graffiti can shed light on the lives of people who might not otherwise have been the subject of more conventional narratives.

Contemporary popular culture places graffiti firmly in an urban context, on walls of concrete, brick or stone. The illegality of graffiti, the clandestine nature of its appearance,

its association with youth or gang culture – instils in us an expectation for it to show up on the rough side of town. And yet, even a limited encounter with the green spaces and rural landscapes beyond the city limits challenges these claims. Trees in particular form an almost ubiquitous canvas for human expression. Like alleyways or garage doors with daubed affirmations we would recognize, trees too are commonly adorned with graffiti, or more properly 'tree carving' or 'arborglyphs'– spray paint's rural cousin. In fact, tree carvings are so ordinary that country lanes, recreational woodland and rambler's pathways, routinely preserve historical dialogues between people and places in the living bark of trees; with the smooth-barked species, such as the beech, being the carver's perennial favourite. Such findings demand a reassessment of the history of graffiti as an exclusively urban phenomenon.

The most familiar categories are engraved names and dates on lower trunks, their ubiquity at times assaulting the senses and drowning out the solitude of 'natural' places. Large numbers of trees with initials or signatures from the early years of the last century are not uncommon and are, in part, a reflection of levels of literacy that had increased consistently if unequally across the country. For example research conducted through consideration of signatures on marriage records in England suggests that by 1900 almost all brides and grooms could sign their own names (Stephens 1990: 555). Other recognizable forms include symbols such as emblazoned hearts encompassing the initials of lovers. It is tempting to see such declarations when found in secretive places as marking furtive trysts, while carvings openly displayed seem to proudly mark fleeting or age-old love affairs. More politically motivated carvings are also common, with symbols such as swastikas, marijuana leaves and pentagrams challenging thresholds of social acceptability, indicating that tree carving continues, if more sporadically, into more recent times. So perhaps it is their very ordinariness and assumed transparency that explains why tree carving as an archaeological record has lain hidden under the radar of academic study for so long.

In this essay we offer some insights about the ways in which tree carving can help to shed light on the past history of places, particularly with a view to understanding their role within the broader politics of place making. Rather than seeing tree inscriptions exclusively as frivolous anecdote's to a day's outing at the park, as we must presume by their invisibility within landscape historiography, it is argued that that such inscriptions can add new degrees of understanding, sometimes unlocking oblique revelations about the social history of rural geographies, particularly where more formal lines of inquiry are less forthcoming.

Cultural Histories of Tree Carving

Because bark inscriptions are not enduring artefacts, it is difficult to establish the antiquity of tree carving. That said, given the human proclivity to create 'art' on stone surfaces at least as early as the Upper Palaeolithic (Leroi-Gourhan 1968), it is not difficult to imagine that trees were also cut, carved, scratched and otherwise transformed into canvases of meaning. The earliest empirical evidence of these practices, however, comes from the early modern period. Based on the written accounts of explorers we know that indigenous cultures carved symbols on trees since at least the opening acts of the European age of discovery. For example, in 1497, John Cabot described in his journal the presence of 'trees bearing marks', along the coast of North America, which he attributed to the local Indians (Batistte 1985: 9). While perceptive explorers, traders and trappers throughout the New World occasionally noted the 'habit' among indigenous tribes for making marks on trees, apart from rare insights about their function as trail markers, for the most part journalists remained mute on the subject.

Systematic attempts to record and interpret these phenomena however, had to wait for the development of social and cultural anthropology in the nineteenth and twentieth century and its continuing engagement with the ethnographic 'Other'. For example, ethnographic work in western Canada, Siberia and Oceania has demonstrated that indigenous peoples carved and painted geometric, human and animal-like symbols on trees for a variety of reasons. Some were important for navigation around vast landscapes: marks on trees could act like road signs, helping to point the way through dense forests and bush country. Others were bound up with more complex social obligations offering glimpses into cosmologies very different from our own: these could mark burial sites, rights of passage, animist relationships or clan totems (Blackstock 2003; Etheridge 1918; Jordan 2001; Tait 1906). For example Michael Blackstock has shown in his recent book *Faces in the Forest* (2003) how anthropomorphic carvings from northern British Columbia – many of which are elaborate and complex – speak to a number of different levels of meaning, which in many cases continue to have social value today, such as marking the ownership of trails, trap lines or the boundaries of tribal territory. In particular, the carvings are socially efficacious in cementing attachments between people and places in the landscape, and are bound up with issues of ancestors, land ownership and sacred places.

The account of tree carving in the 'West' is more problematic. Certainly tree symbolism has an established pedigree within western art, landscape design and of course metaphorically within genealogy (e.g. Davies 1988; Daniels 1988), however, the history of purposefully marking trees is less easy to ascertain, and it is certainly safe to say that western observers have been far more interested in documenting the enigmatic practices of the colonial Other, rather than turning the anthropological lens inward (although see Mallea-Olaetxe 2000, this volume).

With its tendency to become obliterated over time as tree bark cracks and expands through the ageing process, the early history of carving is best appreciated through the pages of literature and art history. Early references to tree carving can be found in classical literature where the act of tree carving was typically seen as an attribute of lovers frolicking in an Arcadian paradise. One of its first appearances is found in Ovid's *Heriodes* where the fountain nymph Oeneme wistfully recalls the Beech trees where her

former lover, Paris, carved her name: 'And I am read there OENEME written by your knife blade; And the more the trunks grow, the greater grows my name' (cited in Lee 1977). Like much else from the classical opus, the lover's motif was continually reinvented from the renaissance until the nineteenth century. A notable example of this is the epic poem *Orlando Furioso* by Lodovico Ariosto (first published in 1516 and subject to numerous reprints) where a major theme concerned the love of *Angelica,* a pagan princess and subject of Orlando's love *and Medoro* a Saracen knight. The scenes that describe their adventures in the Arcadian forests inspired a long series of allegorical paintings. It was during this period that the carved initial, the lovers sign, became established as an important literary and artistic symbol of romantic intent, widely reproduced in paintings and poetry. The description of Medoro and Angelica madly in love, carving each others name on trees became a well known narrative, frequently depicted in both poetry and art up until the early 19th century; a convention that was understood as much by artists as their audiences (Lee 1977). When we inscribe our names within the sign of the heart we're following a tradition that has been around as long as our collective memory.

But western tradition has other meanings attached to tree carving as well. Classical and medieval traditions saw nature as a source of instruction, a book written by the hand of God, from which knowledge could be read about the divine plan and mans' (sic) place in it. As such, writing on the trees could be interpreted as clouding the divine message and thus to be admonished. This approach to nature, the notion of a non-human natural purity that a person's agency could defile, can be traced in the attitudes that found expression in the environmental movement that had taken root early in the last century: tree carving damages trees, it spoils the natural beauty of the bark, it is messy and clutters the view with scripts that obscure the picturesque, in this instance a synonym for 'the natural'. From this standpoint, it is not surprising that mention of tree carving often resulted in warnings and admonishments about the impulsive and 'destructive' behaviour of humans. An original response to such defacement comes from the hand of John Pendleton, a onetime historian of Derbyshire. Describing a favourite tree and employing personification, he wrote 'is it not shameful that in this year of grace 1863 men should cut, break and mutilate my poor old person in all inconceivable ways' (Pendleton 1863: 5).

Certain technological characteristics – mainly involving edged tools of metal or stone – can be said to unite different traditions. However, further cross-cultural similarities seem more difficult to discuss, far more seems to separate them than offer common ground, particularly if we maintain the ugly distinction between 'indigenous' and 'western' traditions of tree carving. Of course, these categorisations say much about the cultural and historical milieus in which they were created and they also continue to shape the kind of attention such artefacts receive. Markings fashioned through the inhabitation of (exotic) societies in places such as North America Australia or Siberia, for example, are demonstratively linked to underlying cultural 'rules' and social consequences, all of which is eagerly assessed and interpreted by the anthropologist. For example, carvings evoking animist beliefs – which impart features in the non-human world with human values – may demand degrees of social reciprocation and obedience completely foreign to the western observer (see Rival 1998; Van Beek and Banga 1992). In contrast, the apparently individualistic and sentimental quality of tree carvings in the woodlands, green spaces and rural geographies of the west are by comparison, conspicuously (and perhaps justifiably) downplayed, and relegated to the status of a trifling diversion; a perception that is reinforced by the bundle of assumptions that sets apart 'us' and our transparent, 'modern' and therefore inherently uninteresting culture when placed against the confounding principals of the exotic. What is more, such indifference may also partly stem from its juxtaposition with contemporary urban graffiti. Because it shares none of the edgy status of the latter, its bucolic associations assures that it, like nature, remains a passive phenomenon, relegated to the margins of public consciousness.

Wild Signs

If we were to content ourselves with the written history of tree carving in Britain as portrayed through the few written sources on the subject, then we might well end our discussion here, with bark inscriptions as rather modest footnote to landscape history. Fortunately, this is not the case, and like the other chapters in this volume, we want to show how the material character of graffiti allows us to access something of the history of people and places that might not otherwise appear in our grander narratives. This is most elucidating if we consider how tree carving, like other forms of landscape figuration, can have an active role on the use and perception of a place, depending upon the ways it becomes entangled with the lives of people who dwell there, and who in turn give it meaning (Bender 2002: 104). Such a position implies that the act of carving is only the starting point in the life history of an object, and that taken in different contexts such features may escape their intended meaning, forming relationships that may be unstable, ambiguous and even *wild* (Attfield 2000; Jorgensen and Tylecote 2007). If trees can play creative or disruptive roles in narratives about places (Jones and Cloke 2003: 214; Oliver 2007a, 2007b) – such as the Oak tree's transformative role in English history – then surely writing on the trees multiplies this potential for historical understanding. Attempting to understand the meaning of carvings relies on more than just decoding incised symbols or script; it requires us to place them in context.

Tree Carving at Wayland's Smithy

Standing on the windswept Ridgeway in Oxfordshire is the Neolithic long barrow of Wayland's Smithy. With sweeping views over the Vale of the White Horse, the Ridgeway has formed an important travel corridor since at least late prehistory and continues to be a favourite long-distance footpath for ramblers investigating the regions archaeology, notably the famous chalk representation of the White Horse and the banks and ditches of Uffington Castle.

3.1 View north showing the long barrow of Wayland's Smithy ringed by a mature stand of beech trees.

3.2 "Picnic' Sep. 8th 1896'.

According to historical sources, the acknowledgement of Wayland's Smithy as an archaeological site, an indelible part of Britain's heritage, seems to date to 1810, when it is thought that the Earl of Craven planted a ring of Beech trees around the plough-damaged barrow in an effort to separate it from the cultivated fields beyond (Peers and Smith 1921: 186). With its patrician associations, subtle lighting effects and cool shade, beech was a favourite of landscape connoisseurs (Daniels 1988: 50). The plantings would not only have helped to form an inviting space around the long barrow, but also a picturesque frame that helped to focus the visitors gaze inwards towards the monument, which according to local legend was the home of the Anglo-Saxon god Wayland the Smith (Figure 3.1).

If the intention was to highlight the tumulus for gentlemen onlookers, then judging by the attention paid to the trees themselves since this time, the history of Wayland's Smithy can only be described as an uneasy one. What immediately strikes the visitor is the amount of tree carving literally covering the trunks of the beech trees: like fly paper they display opinions, symbols and memorials that reflect the varied ways in which this place has been both used and perceived through time. The oldest legible carving is a date that reads '1868', and like many of the early examples, a number of which show clear late-nineteenth century origins, it has the characteristic stretch marks of age. Trees grow in girth over time and so messages carved in their bark will eventually be pulled apart and stretched open, making words and symbols less easy to read. But if we consider that it takes forty or sixty years for a beech tree to grow a suitable trunk to carve, such a date may represent one of the first carvings at the site.

In the nineteenth century, Wayland's Smithy became an important site for antiquarian musing, so it is conceivable that early carvings relate to such visits. Certainly, by 1889, no fewer than eight articles appearing in antiquarian journals and other publications served up theories on its enigmatic origins (Peers and Smith 1920). However, antiquarianism was not the only reason people chose to visit. We should keep in mind that among the growing middle class leisure time was increasingly spent in recreational activities. In fact Wayland's Smithy became part of regular excursions for groups such as the Oxford Natural History Society who helped to popularize ancient monuments to both professional and lay audiences alike. With increasing Victorian interest in Britain's own heritage, the Ridgeway became the focus of middle-class tourism and the 'bagging of monuments' in the tradition of the Grand Tour. So in this context, choosing to commemorate such visits by carving on the living trees, at a time when photography was still unwieldy, may have served as fitting record of their visit.

Not all were in favour of the inevitable wear on the site caused by the public. Echoing today's debate over whether graffiti is art or vandalism, the town clerk of Abingdon, who had a particular 'zeal' and 'pertinacity' for antiquarianism, was said to be greatly disturbed by ramblers who enjoyed numerous 'picnic-fires' next to the barrow's megalithic entrance (Peers and Smith 1921: 197). As if in reply to this remark, one group of picnickers were audacious enough to commemorate the event by carving 'PICNIC SEPT 8TH 1896' into one of the trees, a behaviour that was widely condemned as destructive to nature (see for example Pendleton 1886) (Figure 3.2). Reflecting the continuity of this place as a site for recreation, on the opposite side of the same tree the words 'PICNIC SEPT 8TH 1996' are proudly scored, exactly one-hundred years later. Such evidence not only serves as a form of archaeological record, but also demonstrates how carvings seem to entice dialogue, a feature more commonly associated with the turf wars and the one-upmanship of urban graffiti crews (e.g. Ley and Cybriwsky 1974; Pray and Gastman 2005).

The date '1914' appears prominently at the site no fewer than four times, more so than any other (Figure 3.3). While it is difficult to establish the significance of dates, this apparent clustering may suggest the marking of the first salvos of the Great War. It is not hard to imagine different scenarios where one might choose to memorialise such an event. Separations felt between loved ones or the death of family member would have been enough to inspire commemorative acts. Equally of course, they may have been offered as a more nationalistic gesture. Either way, the carvings are suggestive of how an antiquarian's tumulus, far from the theatre of war, became reframed as a memorial to one of humanities' bloodiest conflicts.

While it is easy to believe that the burial ground was designed and executed for a unique purpose (Edmonds 1999: 56), the ambition of the most recent excavators to restore the monument to its original 'appearance in antiquity' (Atkinson 1965: 126) is less comfortable. Recent work in this area suggest incredibly complex histories of engagement between people and such places and how they could be appropriated and reused over time for different reasons (e.g. Brück 2001). Indeed, we know from recent history that prehistoric monuments have become battlegrounds for a host of cotemporary competing interest groups, running the gamut from archaeologists and heritage managers through to tourists, environmentalists, pagans and others (see Bender 1998; Cresswell 1996; Gillings and Pollard 2004). Of course one of the most important elements in the reworking of sites is the way that the new features and materials become graphed onto the old, often in ways that do not necessary respect older spatial orientations. In this light, the carvings on the Ridgeway, taken as a whole, seem to vie for attention with the monument itself. In fact, so conspicuous are their messages that for some people, the trees have become as important a part of their enjoyment and experience of this place as the barrow itself (Figure 3.4). While the megalithic entrance to the tomb draws people initially to the long barrow, many eventually wander off to investigate the carvings. Moving around the trees, the presence of these historical voices is palpable and many visitors trail their fingers across the heavily scored bark of the trunks. In so doing, they may find the recently incised Japanese character that squares off with a BNP slogan, they may feel the deep cut marks where decades of lovers materialized their devotion for one another; while the more

3.3 '1914'.

exploratory visitor might disturb brambles to find that A.C. Taylor visited this same spot in 1900 and again in 1912.

Such investigative readings of course often inspire new interventions, so that the carvings and their entwined histories become increasingly elaborate. Indeed, the way their authors linger like ghosts (Bell 1997) could be said to interfere with the ability of Wayand's Smithy to have a contained and knowable history. In the same way that the reworking of the monument in prehistory, or the early nineteenth century helped to frame its meaning, the graffiti on the trees has once again elaborated and challenged the way we think about and act in this place.

Conclusion

The study of tree carving like many other forms of historical and contemporary archaeology offers an opportunity for reassessing what often seem like well versed fields of knowledge. Tree carvings provide insights about the different ways that people engaged with rural or semi rural space; they hint at differing intensities of use and value over time, in many places documenting experiences of life now foreign to us. They show us about desire lines (Tiessen 2007), or the way people want to use places in ways not foreseen by earlier designs. They point to how people are not just passive consumers of places, but active participants, whose actions subsequently influence the perceptions and actions of others. It is in this sense that we can see such features as 'wild signs': wild as much in their ability to challenge past discourses of places as in their ability to provoke reactions and reinterpretations. From this point of view, their traditional associations with a timeless and bucolic idyll, without conflict or tension, become much more difficult to uphold.

Like urban graffiti, tree carving is often maligned or ignored. This chapter has attempted to redress this situation. By exploring the green spaces beyond our cities and towns, the archaeological record of ordinary peoples inscribed on the bark of living trees provides a novel, if somewhat unorthodox means of exploring the history of places with seemingly uncontroversial pasts. Once you start looking, they can be found almost everywhere. They change our views about landscapes infusing dynamic, fluid and even conflicting perspectives on places we often assume to be ageless, static or just plain dull. To acknowledge such marks, as can be found in almost any wood, is to respect the most ordinary voices and the stories they tell.

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3.4 Visitors to site admire the encircling trees.

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Magic Markers: The Evocative Potential of Carvings on Stanton Moor Edge, Derbyshire, UK

Stella McGuire

This essay, which I see as both optimistic and pessimistic, will take a look at how – sometimes – we can use objects (some of them fairly unpromising) to prompt thought about the relatively recent past and to make it live a little. Certain objects let us people the past with characters, and hint at its colour and texture. Like little Prousts, we can conjure up something of the original oddity and vividness of lived lives. We can even use gaps in our evidence as a springboard for imagining all sorts of interesting possibilities.

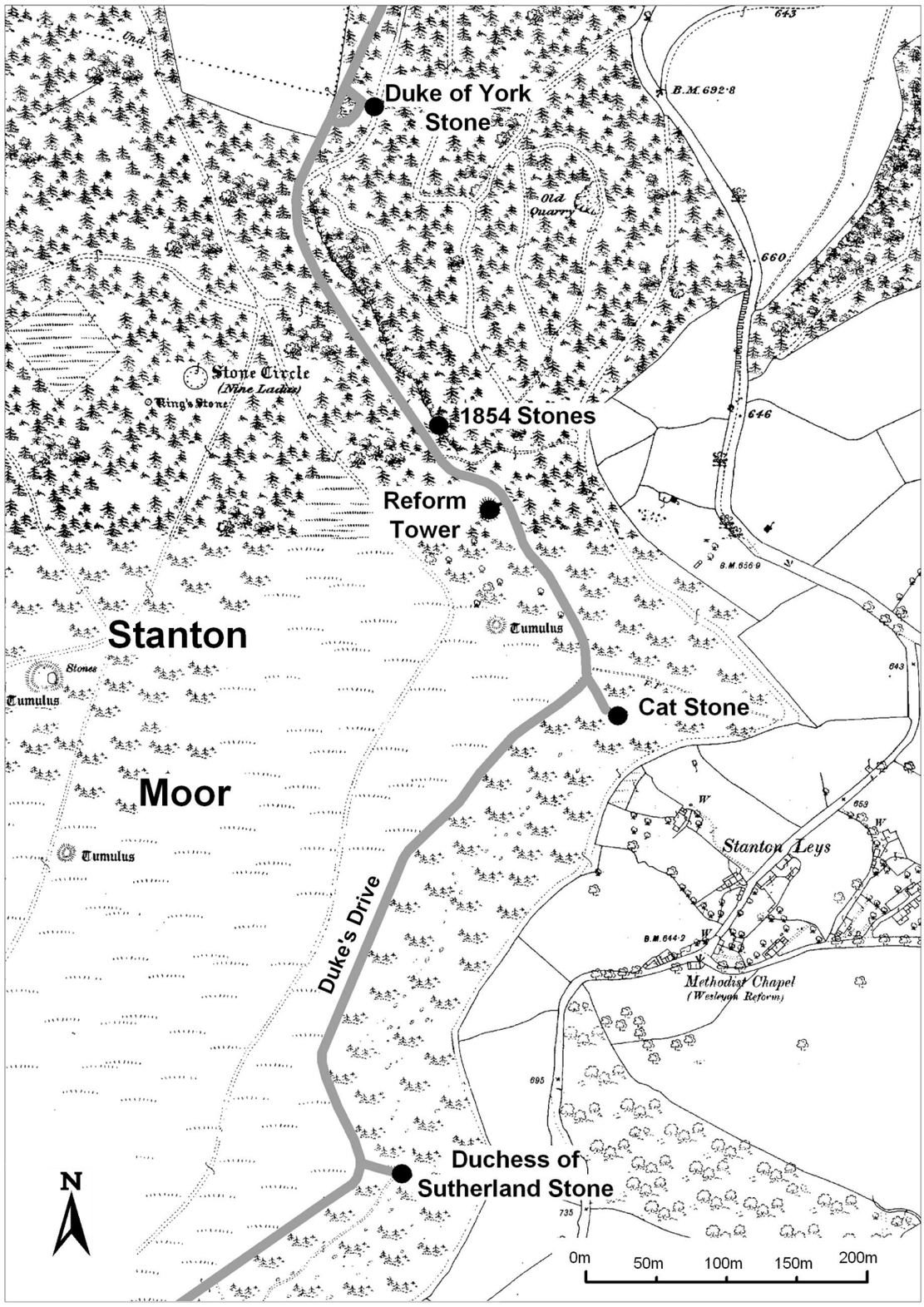
That is the optimistic part. More gloomy is the contrast between what we can deduce or surmise about the motivation and experience of the recently-dead, and what we can say about the texture and atmosphere of prehistoric experience.

4.1 Location of Peak District National Park.

My evidence comes from marks on rocks: in fact, some rather fancy nineteenth century inscriptions on gritstone. Jeff Oliver and Tim Neal thinking about how to express the central premise of papers presented at the 2005 TAG conference session on graffiti (see Introduction) characterised wild signs as irregular and inappropriate, challenging the discourse of the status quo. I am not sure that 'my' signs do this: in some ways, as I hope to convince you, they could be seen as an expression of the way in which a relatively moneyed set of landowners used the natural (although already tamed) landscape as a frame to boast about their acquaintances and express their rival political standpoints. Nearly two centuries later, the modern wildness of the inscriptions derives not from the motives that prompted their carving, but from our perception of the mystery attached to them: their odd, half-hidden locations – rendered even odder by some fairly drastic changes in the modern landscape – and our rather dimly-perceived understanding of what they may have meant. Both physically and intellectually, they are hard to get at.

The wild signs I would like to discuss are a group of early to mid nineteenth century carved inscriptions on natural and semi-natural blocks of gritstone (and on a gritstone prospect tower) on the eastern edge of Stanton Moor in the UK's Peak District National Park (Figure 4.1). The moor, a scheduled landscape, is best known for its Early Bronze Age cairnfield (much of it funerary) and a string of ceremonial structures – small stone circles and ring cairns. It is not a big area: set slightly apart from the main mass of Derbyshire's East Moors, it forms a detached block of high land, surrounded by limestone pasture and the valleys of the rivers Wye and Derwent. It is possible that the rather separate quality of this piece of land, and the presence on it of natural rock pillars, were part of the reason why this was the 'right place' to hold ceremonies and to bury the dead in the Early Bronze Age.

At around the same time – or perhaps a little earlier – people carved hard-to-interpret designs on rock outcrops at nearby Rowtor and Harthill. Relatively small in scale, these include pecked-out concentric circles, small cups, and a petal-like circular frieze, which link them stylistically to other Neolithic / Bronze Age rock art scattered across northern Britain. There is much valuable analysis of such carvings – in terms of design, landscape position and inclusion within monuments, but their function and meaning remain open to speculation.



4.2 Eastern edge of Stanton Moor in 1879, showing location of inscribed stones and Duke's Drive.

Moving forward in time, the local gritstone (a form of sandstone) has been a valuable resource for centuries – used for lintels, field walls, industrial grindstones, baking stones, gravestones, building stone. More recently (and often controversially) large quarries have bitten into the edges of the moor and cut into surrounding hillsides. This is not remote moorland but a used and lived-in area, peppered with small villages. Fittingly in this peopled landscape, most of the rock pillars have their own traditional names: Cork Stone, Andle ('Anvil') Stone, Heart Stone and Cat Stone. Some have carved footholds and metal handholds to act as climbing aids – dating from the nineteenth century or perhaps earlier – and many are covered in initials and dates: 'standard' graffiti.

Along the eastern edge of the moor, pitted with quarries, there is evidence for something different. On natural rock outcrops (some of them part-quarried) are carefully-worked dates, initials and coronets in bas-relief (Figures 4.3 to 4.8). The earliest is dated 1826, the latest 1854. Now largely hidden by trees, most of these carvings teeter on the edge of dangerously steep drops into the quarries below. They all lie a few metres from a public footpath – but cannot now be seen from it. The path (still known as the 'Duke's Drive') follows the route of what was once a wider track (Figure 4.2), partly terraced into the slope and probably created in the early nineteenth century to enable visitors to enjoy the long views of the Derwent Valley visible from this part of what was then an aristocratic estate, owned by the Duke of Rutland.

Skilfully done, the majority of the carvings were recorded in a 1986 field survey of Stanton Moor by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (now merged with English Heritage), where they are described as 'quarrymen's graffiti of an exceptionally high standard' (RCHME 1986, part 4). But is this what they are?

The northernmost inscribed pillar features a (probably) ducal coronet carved in bas-relief, and below it a large incised capital Y and the date 1826 (Figure 4.3). These are set within a carefully-cut recessed panel, measuring roughly 90 x 50cm. The panel has been created on a 3m high natural stone pillar, heavily weathered on its summit. Largely masked by trees, it now stands on the edge of a steep drop into Lees Cross Quarry. The inscription faces east, looking out across the drop, and is only visible by climbing slightly downslope towards the quarry edge. In the modern landscape, this is a 'hidden' monument: from the public footpath that passes through the woodland a few metres to the west, the carvings are invisible. Most visitors to Stanton Moor do not know they are there.

When the carved panels were first created, the local landscape was different. The 1879 Ordnance Survey map shows a northern extension of the Duke's Drive passing close by and to the west, on the line now followed by the public footpath (Figure 4.2). It also shows a small looping path (whose partly-revetted course can still be traced on the ground) curving out from the Drive to allow access to the rock pillar. The quarry did not yet exist, and the map shows a branch of the 'drive' snaking down the now-destroyed hillside below the pillar, to pass just a few metres downslope from it. The remains of this track are still visible, terraced into the hillside just below and to one side of the rock, but it now leads straight out into empty air.

Additional evidence for the original ornamental (and possibly commemorative) function of the inscribed pillar within the landscape is provided by an Early Victorian tourist guidebook. Praising the pleasures of a trip onto Stanton Moor Edge, the book describes the 'lovely grass walks or rides, winding along the top, and on the edge, of the bold and lofty cliffs, studded with immense gritstone blocks. On the south side of one of these, overhanging the rides, is sculptured the coronet of the Duke of Rutland; under it, a large Y and the date 1826' (Adam 1845:203).

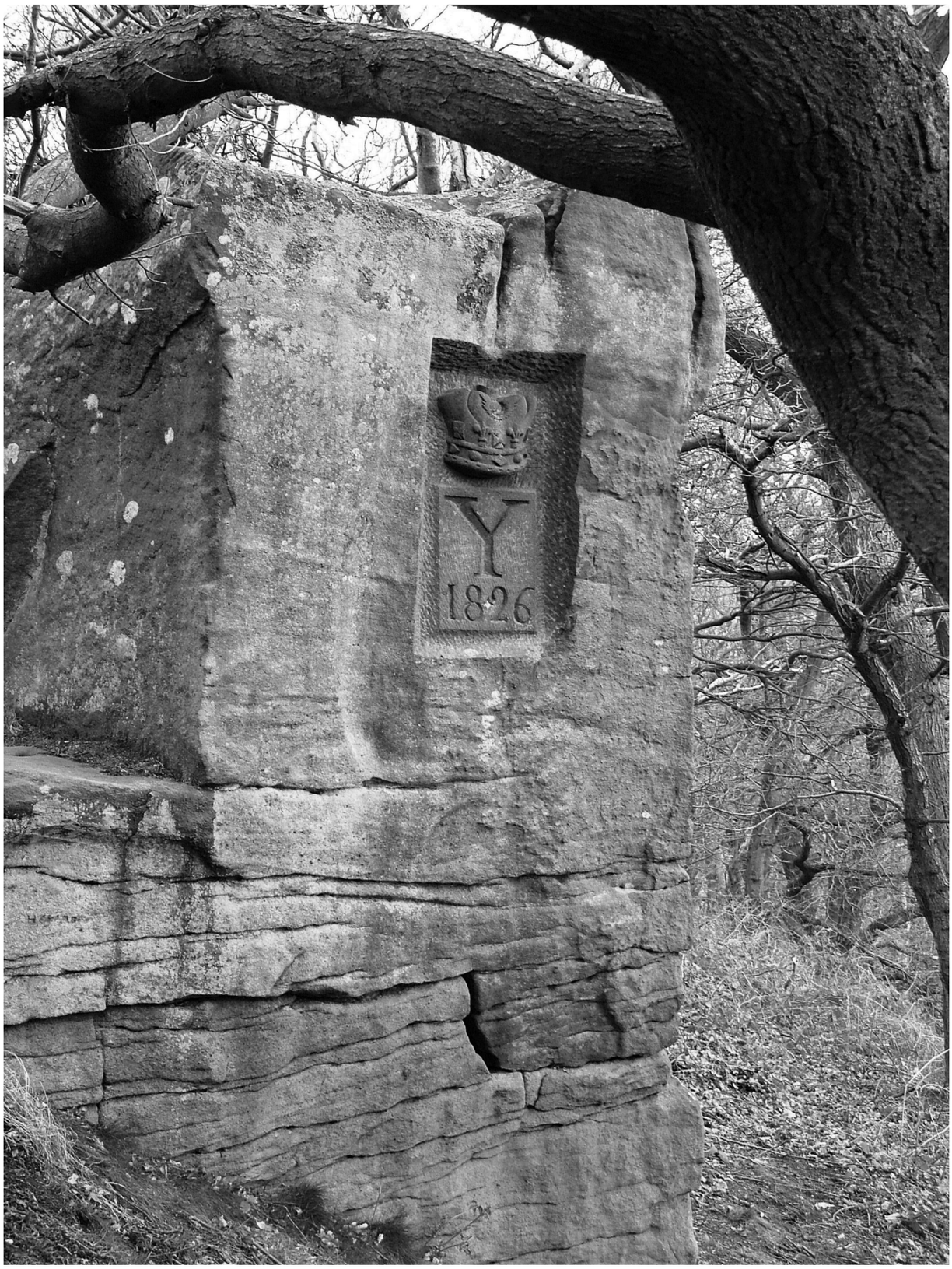
Adam does not give the pillar a name (and his statement that this is the Rutland coronet may be mistaken, given that each of the three coronets on the rock outcrops along the Edge is of a different pattern). However, antiquarian and excavator Percy Heathcote, whose family had lived close to the moor for several generations, referred to it consistently as the 'Duke of York Stone' (e.g. Heathcote 1947:27). We will come back to this Duke of York – and his possible identity – a little later on.

Roughly 300m to the south of this Stone, two massive part-quarried blocks of gritstone lie on the hillside. Surrounded by trees and bracken, and partly projecting over the quarry edge, they are almost completely invisible to walkers on the popular footpath that passes just a few metres away upslope. There are two inscriptions here, both facing north up the valley of the River Derwent (Figure 4.4). One, cut into the prepared face of an in-situ gritstone outcrop, is fairly similar in composition to the Duke of York Stone: a deeply recessed panel, measuring 84 x 54cm, with bas-relief coronet, and below it an incised capital G and the date 1854 (Figure 4.5). A massive block of quarried rock lies just in front of this: on its northern face is another, slightly smaller, recessed panel. Incised into this are the letters A.G.E.N. and the same date:1854 (Figure 4.6). The full stops (which are set half way up the letters) are hard to see now, but can be felt if you run your hand across the stone.

The position of these two inscriptions in their contemporary (mid nineteenth century) landscape is harder to make sense of than the Duke of York Stone. For both of them to have been visible from below, a drive or ride must have passed very close to them – where there is now only empty air. One other possibility is that a (now-vanished) track or set of steps led down to them from the Duke's Drive. Nowadays, the visitor has to scramble a few metres downslope through the surrounding trees, to reach the quarry edge on which they stand.

Unlike the other inscribed rock pillars elsewhere along Stanton Moor Edge, I have not been able to trace a local name for these stones – either Victorian or more recent.

Further south, roughly 350m along the edge is a 5m high



4.3 Duke of York Stone, Stanton Moor Edge.

4.4 Ornamental panels, both dated 1854, carved on part-quarried blocks on Stanton Moor Edge.

natural rock pillar known as the Cat Stone, which stands above a steep, part-quarried drop. On its west-facing side is a semi-inset panel, bearing incised capitals 'EIN' and the date 1831 (Figure 4.7). The pillar is a popular base for twentieth / twenty-first century graffiti, but the inset panel and the date and the skill with which this inscription has been carved, suggest a link with the other 'formal' rock inscriptions on this edge of the moor. Carefully-cut footholds have been set into the north-facing side of the pillar, perhaps in the nineteenth century. As with the other inscribed rocks, the 1879 OS map (Figure 4.2) shows a short link from the Duke's Drive leading off to the Cat Stone[1]. The rock pillar is now partly surrounded by oak, birch and sweet chestnut, but the level and obvious route from the modern footpath means that, unlike the other inscribed stones, it is much-visited.

South again is the last of the inscriptions: this time on a natural gritstone outcrop, lying on the lip of the east-facing slope of Stanton Moor Edge (Figure 4.8). Referred to by Percy Heathcote in 1947 as the 'Duchess of Sutherland Stone', it has been ornamented with a very oddly-placed carving, tilting slightly upwards on the eastern side of the outcrop, just below its highest point. Because of the angle at which it is set, this inscription has suffered more weathering than the others, and is harder to read. Again, it consists of a recessed panel, with a coronet in bas-relief, and below it letters that probably read HS (although the 'H' is not totally convincing [2]) and the date 1830.

In this case, there are no trees to hide the inscription – but it remains invisible until the visitor has walked away from the modern footpath, out onto the flat top of the rock, and looked down. Given its angle, it would be difficult (if not impossible) to see this panel from below, for example from any track or ride passing along the lower hillside. However, as with the Duke of York and Cat Stones, the 1879 map shows a short, level link from the Duke's Drive leading out to this stone (Figure 4.2). This would have allowed 19th century visitors to reach its flat summit, appreciate the long view of the Derwent Valley that it offered, and admire the inscription (which would have had to be read 'upside down' as viewers would have been standing above it). In the modern landscape, two narrow informal tracks now lead

[1] A path out to the Cat Stone had already been referred to, and recorded in a drawing, by the antiquarian Hayman Rooke in the 1780s.

[2] While not entirely clear (partly due to weathering) the first letter appears likely to be an 'H'. It was read as this by Heathcote (1947), and the spacing of the upright strokes in relation to the letter 'S' suggests that it is more likely to be an 'H' than (for example) two 'I's. Although not easily visible, a horizontal bar between the two upright strokes can be felt with the hand.

4.5 Close-up view of southern '1854' panel, Stanton Moor Edge.

4.6 Close-up view of northern '1854' panel, Stanton Moor Edge.

out to the rock – although many visitors probably fail to notice the carving.

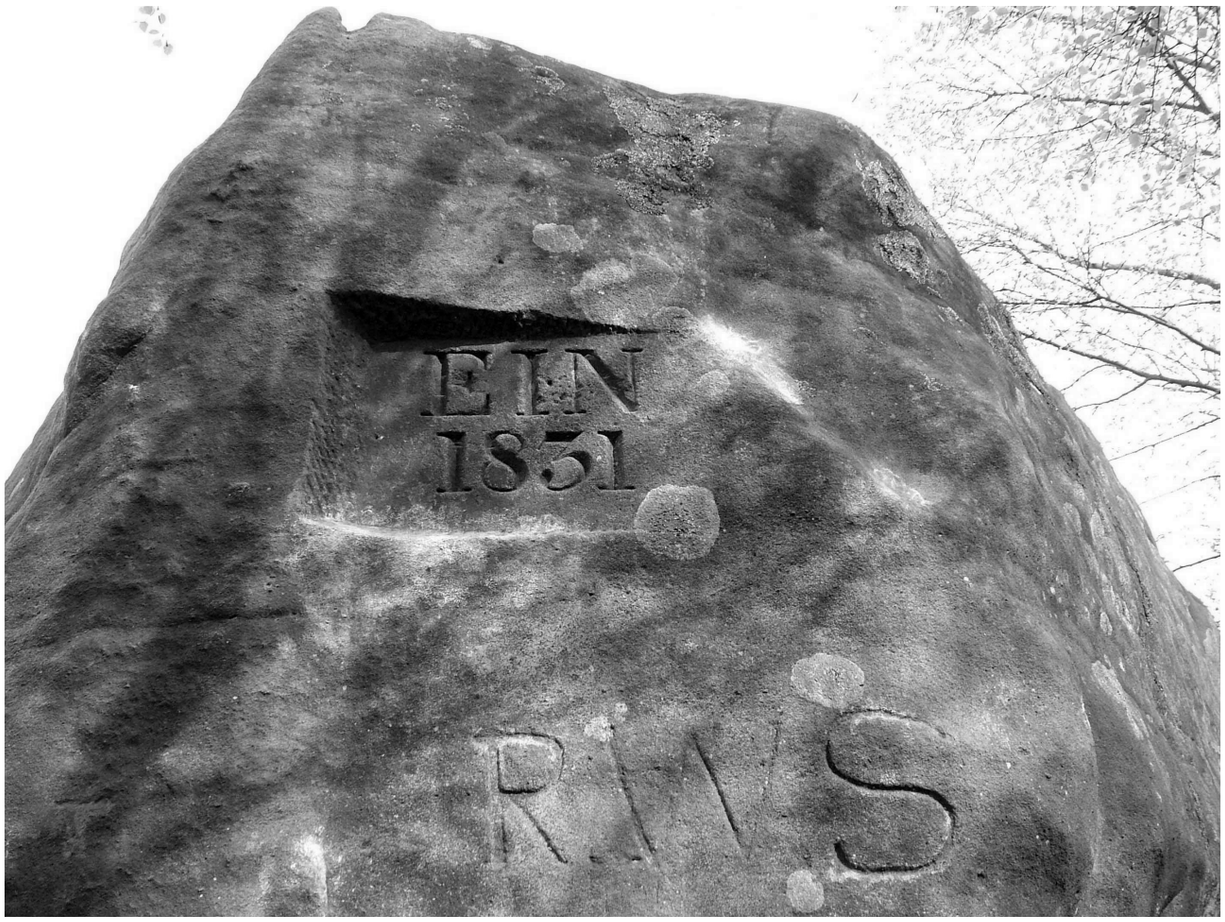
No other stones on the moor bear these dated inscriptions and coronets. However, until the early 1980s, there was another, very similar, stone panel – in this case, set into a building rather than carved into natural rock. Less than 200m north-west of the Cat Stone a gritstone prospect tower rises from Stanton Moor Edge. Known as the Reform (or 'Earl Grey') Tower, it was built to mark and celebrate the 1832 Reform Act (discussed in a little more detail below). In the photograph at Figure 4.9 a blank niche can be seen above the east-facing blocked doorway. Until the tower was damaged in a storm about 20 years ago, this niche held a stone panel, inscribed 'Earl Grey 1832' and ornamented with a different form of coronet – appropriately enough, that of an Earl[3]. Although the style of carving is somewhat different from that on the inscribed rock pillars, the thematic link between them seems clear.

What connects these now largely hidden (or lost) inscriptions? What function did they serve in their nineteenth century surroundings? And what roles do they play for modern audiences, who see them in a changed landscape and from twenty-first century perspectives?

At the time when these inscriptions were created, all (except for the Reform Tower panel) were sited on land belonging to the Duke of Rutland (whose family was, and still is, one of the major Derbyshire landowners). As the description above makes clear, Stanton Moor Edge gives fine views of the valley of the River Derwent and the high moorland beyond, and the most likely explanation for the creation of the inscriptions on these stones is that they formed stopping points or ornaments along a 'drive' designed to enable visitors to appreciate the landscape views. They probably also acted as a form of talking point and self-advertisement, emphasising (as we shall see) the landowner's friends and – perhaps – his political perspectives. The Reform Tower must have served a similar function: a 'prospect tower' that allowed visitors to appreciate the views from its roof (formerly accessible via an interior staircase), and also proclaimed itself – and the owner of the land on which it stood – to people living in or travelling through the valley.

However, despite the fact that they are so close to each other, the Tower and the inscribed pillars and blocks of stone lie on different sides of a nineteenth century property boundary: a boundary marked by the line of the Duke's Drive (Figure 4.2). To the east of this line lay the Duke of

[3] The only photograph I have been able to trace of this plaque is reproduced (in rather poor quality) on p. 50 of F. Rodgers' *Curiosities of the Peak*, published in 1992 by Derbyshire Countryside Ltd. The same photograph also features in the 1979 edition of this book.



4.7 Inset panel and later graffiti on Cat Stone, Stanton Moor Edge.

Rutland's land, while to the west lay Stanton Moor, owned by the Thornhill family. At the time the carvings were made, the inscribed pillars and blocks were all on the Duke's land, while the Tower was built by William Pole Thornhill of Stanton Hall, on land that belonged to his estate.

The siting of these monuments and inscriptions on different sides of a land ownership boundary may offer a partial clue to why they take the form they do. In the early nineteenth century, the Thornhills were Whigs, and in the 1830s supported Earl Grey's measures to extend the right to vote to a wider range of property owners: hence the building of the Tower, commemorating the successful passing of Prime Minister Grey's 1832 Reform Bill. The Fifth Duke of Rutland, on the other hand, seems to have felt very differently – perhaps, like many Tories at the time, seeing Reform as a disastrous opening-up of politics to mob rule (Mitchell 2005). Although a regular seasonal visitor to his shooting box at Stanton Woodhouse (from which, after 1832, he may have had a clear view of his neighbour's Tower) the Fifth Duke's main residence was Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire. Here, alarmed by social ferment at the time of the Bill, he is said to have 'armed his servants and labourers, acquired ammunition for his cannon, normally used for firing salutes, and installed an artillery sergeant' (Foss 1986: 83).

We could speculate about a sequence of events in which the Duke of Rutland embellished the route through the Stanton Moor Edge section of his Estate by creating the inscription in honour of the (Tory) Duke of York in 1826. In turn, in 1832, the Thornhills celebrated the triumph of 'their' man, the Whig Earl Grey, by building the Reform Tower on the same gritstone edge as the Duke's pillar (but just within their own boundary) – and adorned it with the same design elements: a coronet, a name (rather than an initial) and a date. Did the building of the Tower constitute a piece of serious political one-upmanship or something more light-hearted? (In practice, it seems as though the families may have got on pretty well as country neighbours.)

The next few paragraphs will show that, as with the possible expression of early nineteenth century political rivalry embodied in the siting of the Reform Tower in relation to the Duke of York Stone, the Stanton Moor Edge inscriptions offer fascinating scope for speculation about motive and meaning. They prompt us to think about a rich and complex world that existed less than a couple of centuries ago: about interactions between human beings, about politics and war, about love affairs, and ridicule, and scandal. They unlock (perhaps) a little bit of this richness. If we want to, we can use them to bring this part of the moor to life, to populate it with figures who (tangentially maybe) take us back to past lives. But, as my attempts to get at their origin will

show – they also illustrate just how uncertain and limited our knowledge can be, even at this fairly small remove. Inevitably, that leads to reflection on how difficult it is to breathe life – in its complexity – into far older carvings: for example the Neolithic or Bronze Age rock art at nearby Rowtor and Harthill.

Taking the Duke of York Stone first: if we assume that the traditional name is accurate, the subject would appear to be Frederick Augustus, Duke of York, alive in 1826 but dead the following year. The son of King George 3rd, he became Commander-in-Chief of the British Army. More famously (for a modern audience) he was the Grand Old Duke of York of the nursery rhyme, who 'had ten thousand men', and 'marched them up to the top of the hill / And he marched them down again'. According to nursery rhyme analysts Iona and Peter Opie (1992: 442, 443), this may have been a traditional rhyme, applied to Frederick by 'some nimble-witted detractor'. They quote the sad comment from one biographer that 'the name of Frederick Duke of York has only been preserved from oblivion by a cruel and senseless jingle'.

Ironically perhaps, he is also said to have had a well-known affair with the Duchess of Rutland – the wife of the man who owned the land on which the inscribed stone stands. In the early nineteenth century, the Duchess, referred to by a contemporary, the Marchioness of Westminster, as 'that goddess of folly', spent huge amounts on the family seat at Belvoir Castle, Leicestershire (Foss 1986: 83). She was mocked for including an image of her lover on a lavish ceiling created for her in the castle's Elizabethan Saloon, and the Marchioness 'found it impossible to see without laughing the medallion at one end of the ceiling representing the Duke of York as Jupiter, undressed utterly to the waist and rather fatter and older than the Duke himself' (Foss 1986: 83).

In sum then, we have an isolated gritstone pillar, in woodland, on the edge of a quarry, with a carved panel that is only seen by a few, and whose original function is now largely lost. But it is still capable of conjuring up a strange brew: an ornament or talking point on a route through a wealthy estate; a nursery rhyme (probably known to millions of English-speakers) which – perhaps unfairly – mocked a man's military prowess; contemporary laughter at the same man's image as a fat, ageing Jupiter on his mistress's expensively-created ceiling; the possibility that this mistress was the wife of the man who commissioned the gritstone inscription; his death the year after the date on the stone panel (and the Duchess's death the year before).

But is any of this admissible: does this stone really refer to that Duke? And why is it here? Does it commemorate a visit perhaps? (Potentially helpful family archives are currently hard to access, but a search of the newspaper archive for this period has so far failed to reveal any announcement of his presence locally.) Or does the carving celebrate a political affinity? In 1826 (the date on the stone) the Duke of York gave vocal support in the House of Lords to a very Tory cause: protectionism and the retention of the Corn Laws. Was the carving therefore a political gesture aimed at the Fifth Duke of Rutland's more 'liberal' neighbour, William Thornhill – prompting (as speculated above) the building of the Reform Tower as a form of retaliation?

As with the Duke of York Stone, the name 'Duchess of Sutherland Stone' (Figure 4.8) presumably relates to the ornamental panel that the stone bears. Although not yet proven, it seems reasonable to suggest that the initials and coronet carved into this gritstone outcrop are those of Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland (1806 - 1868)[4].

The Sutherlands, the family into which she had married, became notorious for their role in the mass clearance of tenants from the Scottish Highlands, between the late eighteenth and mid nineteenth centuries. (Enormously rich and well-connected, by the 1830s the Sutherlands were Whigs not Tories: unfortunately – for my argument – cutting across any easy assumptions about straightforward Whig / Tory rivalry being expressed through monuments on Stanton Moor Edge.) By the mid 1800s Harriet Sutherland was prominent in the movement for the abolition of slavery, and a patroness of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of Uncle Tom's Cabin – activities that prompted Karl Marx to write a vitriolic article in The People's Paper, which attacked her for posing as a philanthropist when her family were guilty of such massive injustices in Scotland. 'The enemy of British Wage-Slavery has a right to condemn Negro-Slavery; a Duchess of Sutherland, a Duke of Atholl, a Manchester cotton-lord – never!' (Marx 1853).

In 1850 / 1851 she and her husband built Cliveden, the Italianate mansion in Buckinghamshire, England – later (with its swimming pool) to become synonymous with the best-known British political scandal of the 1960s, the 'Profumo Affair', starring a very mixed cast and making famous the retort, 'Well he would, wouldn't he?'[5].

You could say that I am building a rather tottering tower of extrapolation on fairly limited foundations: a small, hard-to-see inscription on a rather isolated gritstone outcrop. But it is fascinating and, I think, moving, to stand on Stanton Moor Edge on a grey day, to look down at this weathered carving tilted towards the sky, and reflect on its possible connections with significant human experience two centuries ago: slavery and its abolition; thousands of families cleared from the remote north of Scotland; extreme wealth and iconic scandal (Cliveden and – when their time came – John Profumo and Mandy Rice-Davies). As with the Duke of York Stone, the carving provides an evocative link between the modern observer and a complex and messy eighteenth and nineteenth century world – and a projection forward into an equally complicated twentieth century.

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[4] She was Harriet, Marchioness of Stafford (also HS) in 1830, becoming Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland in 1833.

[5] Mandy Rice-Davies, described as a 'showgirl' in contemporary reports of the Profumo Affair, gave evidence at the trial of one of the key figures in the scandal, Stephen Ward. Challenged by Prosecuting Council, who sonorously pointed out that Lord Astor denied having had an affair with her; she replied 'Well he would, wouldn't he?' – an unanswerable response that was to take on a life of its own.

4.8 Carved panel on Duchess of Sutherland Stone, Stanton Moor Edge.

4.9 The Reform Tower above Stanton Moor Edge, showing empty niche above blocked doorway.

The other carvings present greater problems: who, for example, is represented by the 'G' with the coronet and the date of 1854? One possibility is George, Duke of Cambridge: a grandson of George 3rd, he became Commander-in-Chief of the British Army (like the Duke of York) and went to the Crimea in 1854. But this remains speculation. I have similarly drawn a blank with 'A.G.E.N. 1854' and with 'EIN 1831'. So far, all three remain mysteries – which in some ways, does not make them any less appealing.

What then is the positive potential of these gritstone inscriptions? We can look at them in different ways (some of them apparently contradictory) and use them to signify different things, of value to different audiences.

First, even without any knowledge of why they are there and what they 'mean' (even, perhaps, *because* of this lack of knowledge) the carvings have real visual power. In part, this power derives from the oddness of their position in the modern landscape – on quarried edges – and from their now-archaic iconography. (Apart from the editors of Burke's Peerage and the occasional Royal Correspondent, who now can tell one coronet from another?) They also gain mystery from the trees that surround them (the fact that they are hidden and have to be found) and from their close relationship to the evocative landscape of Stanton Moor, with its burial cairns and stone circles. If they were better known, tidied up, signposted, advertised and explained, would they lose much of their odd power to impress?

Second, (and on a different tack) we can mine their potential as straightforward physical evidence for the historical development of this landscape and the uses made of it by its landowners (uses that may be both practical and more abstract). Building on this, we could use the rock inscriptions and the Reform Tower as tools for analysis of changing fashions in the way nineteenth century gentry ornamented and displayed their estates – a continuation of eighteenth century interest in 'wild', rocky landscapes. The carvings provide evidence of the way in which landowners sought to inscribe themselves – and their social and political connections – within the land that they owned, using natural materials (already at hand) to do this.

Third, (once we do know something – even a little – about them) we can see that these inscriptions have great interpretive value: in the sense that they have the capacity to enrich visitors' understanding and experience of this landscape. They link this empty Derbyshire escarpment to a rich and very diverse world a couple of centuries ago. They point to the complex network of connections that exists between human beings – connections that may be official (perhaps meriting inscriptions) or unofficial (sexual

liaisons, perhaps ending in mockery). They contrast big events with small human frailties. They tell us of things both formal and informal: the lives people led; the reactions of their contemporaries; the figure they cut; the way they showed off; the way they were cut down to size.

So – both as mysterious objects and as partly-understood interpretive tools – they are extremely evocative: they have a power to connect with people's imaginations in a way that words on a page may not have.

Finally, the slithery and (in some cases) full-of-holes nature of my evidence for the 'meaning' of rock inscriptions from less than two centuries ago emphasises how extraordinarily difficult it is to get any sense of the rich and complicated world that must lie behind far older carvings, such as those prehistoric patterns at Rowtor and Harthill. It acts as a useful reminder that, while we weave interpretive schemes and talk of ritual and ceremonial function, the thing that we can no longer get any sense of is a prehistoric world full of official achievements, formal roles, dicey affairs, showing off, mocking rhymes and sniggering at people's mad schemes. The muddled complexity of such a world is now out of our reach – but we should not allow ourselves to forget the colour, the messiness and the sheer oddness of lived lives.

Acknowledgements

My interest in the Stanton Moor Edge inscriptions was prompted by research that I undertook during the compilation of the Stanton Moor Conservation Plan (McGuire and Smith 2007) – a document commissioned by English Heritage from the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA). I would like to thank Jon Humble, Inspector of Monuments at English Heritage, and Ken Smith, Cultural Heritage Manager, PDNPA, for enabling me to undertake the relevant research. Thanks are also due to Diane Tranter and Angela Johnson at PDNPA for the provision of Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

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Traces of Presence and Pleading: Approaches to the Study of Graffiti at Tewkesbury Abbey

Kirsty Owen

His sarcophagus edges the Lady Chapel,
alabaster, according to his own design.
No coincidence, where folk make
pilgrimage for healing to Lacy's tomb,
they reach up with their knives
and cut their names on Stafford's.
The guide says: Only yesterday, I found
a child jumping on his chest.
Five hundred years or more
the only solace here, to spoil

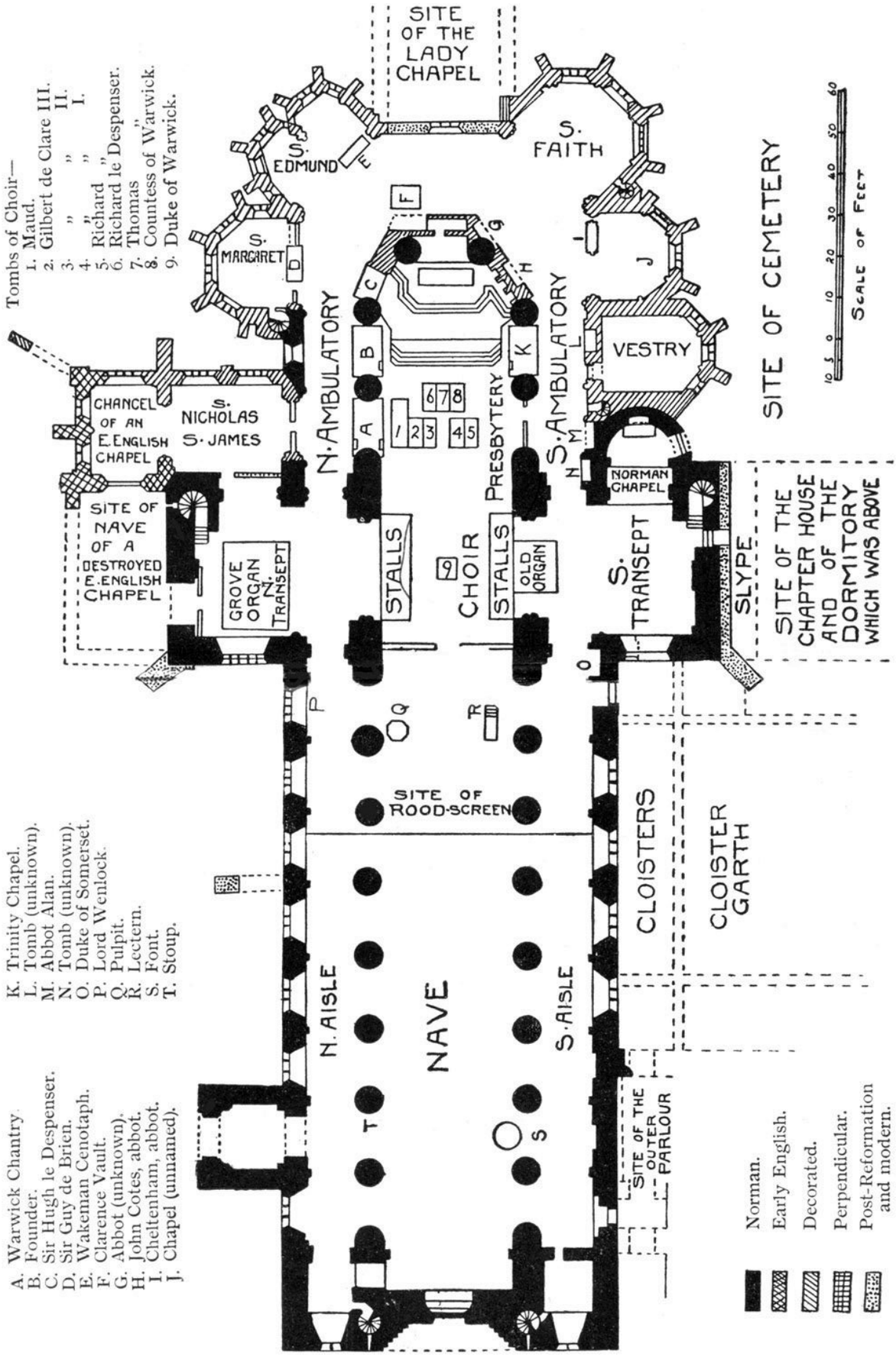
These verses were composed by Rose Cook (2001), a Devonshire poet, in tribute to the scratches that she observed on the tombs at Exeter Cathedral. They highlight a contrast between how such acts of inscription might have been perceived in the middle ages versus modern attitudes to graffiti and vandalism. Contemporary reactions to graffiti are associated with fears of disorder, defacement and immorality. It is a well established topic of discussion among sociologists, particularly in relation the controversial politics of particular groups of individuals. For example, Julie Peteet (1996) has examined the graffiti of the West Bank in her discussion of the politics of the Intifada. Kenneth Grieb (2004) has looked at how graffiti in Mexico was used as a government propaganda tool in the mid-1970s. The idea of graffiti as a controversial and intrusive act is strong within contemporary society, so much so that it can affect perceptions of older inscriptions and their value as witnesses to past attitudes to and uses of space. The votive acts of Lacy's pilgrims have merged with the image of the child jumping on Stafford's chest, rendering the graffiti an inconvenient defacement rather than an informative cultural production.

The marks made by the pilgrims that Rose Cook describes were intended as an acknowledgment of the sanctity of the spaces in which they moved and a statement of their desire to remain close to them. The child is a representation of contemporary ambivalence to the material traces of the past and an indication of how perceptions of space can change. The relationship between the marks and the spiritual context in which they were created becomes lost. As a result there is a danger that they could be judged according to contemporary attitudes to ostensibly disorganised marks within organised spaces. This poem illustrates how far attitudes to the expression of individual identity in public spaces have changed since the sixteenth century. To express individuality in a place strongly associated with the values of a community is often disparaged in contemporary society. The word 'graffiti' has negative connotations, associated with vandalism and illegality. However, it is simplistic to assume that the expression of individuality in a public space has always been frowned upon or discouraged. The medieval cathedrals and churches of England, which we try to conserve in their empty post-reformation state, were once dynamic spaces filled with evidence of individual devotions. These included altar furnishings and wall paintings, paid for and periodically renewed by parishioners and wealthy benefactors. Brasses, tombs, memorial inscriptions and heraldry gave permanence to prominent local identities in communal space. Within this dynamic environment, which was much less formalised than the bare stone of today's surviving churches suggests, it is not hard to believe that graffiti might have been regarded rather differently.

Contemporary attitudes towards individual expression may help to explain why the study of church graffiti has been so neglected by archaeologists and historians. This paper will consider the reasons why inscriptions in churches, cathedrals and abbeys have received so little attention and examine the importance of marks such as those on Lacy's tomb in the context of late medieval personal devotion. The primary focus of this paper will be devoted to the graffiti of the former abbey church at Tewkesbury as this site features a variety of medieval and more recent graffiti that is typical of major religious sites. However, I will also draw liberally from a number of other examples that help to demonstrate this variability. The following analysis is intended to illustrate the research potential of medieval and early modern graffiti and to encourage further work to be carried out.

Interpretations of Graffiti in Religious Contexts

In her 2001 volume Graffiti and the Arts of Early Modern England, Juliet Fleming suggests that attitudes to graffiti are not everywhere and at once the same. She argues that since the early modern English had no specific term to denote graffiti, it was not necessarily singled out as a particularly intrusive or destructive act, separate from other forms of writing. Therefore, writing on the walls was not unavoidably something to be condemned or even discouraged. This has been recognised by the small number of authors who have analysed graffiti from Christian contexts in Continental Europe and Russia. For example, John Bushnell points out that graffiti writing was an important component of Kievian religious practice in the middle ages. Inscribing crosses on



5.1 Memorials in the Despenser Mausoleum at Tewkesbury Abbey.

the walls was 'intended to put the writer in communion with God' (Bushnell 1990: 9).

Violet Pritchard's (1967) study of medieval graffiti in Cambridgeshire is one of a few thorough studies of English medieval graffiti that has been produced. However, it is essentially an anthology of church graffiti in Cambridgeshire (recorded as rubbings), which lacks a thorough discussion of the context in which the marks were made, and does not discuss – let alone question – the contemporary image of graffiti as defacement. Pritchard compares the imagery to that of contemporary manuscripts and in doing so divorces it from its environs. Loss of context inevitably results in loss of meaning with little chance of comprehending the reasons for the choice of image, possible relationships to its location and medium of inscription. Despite its limited perspective, Pritchard's book provides a useful guide to the various forms of imagery that might be found in medieval churches in England and is unique in this respect. It is necessary to look elsewhere to find a study that considers why certain images were chosen and placed in particular locations. Detlev Kraak's (2001) article 'Heraldic Traces of Later Medieval Noble Travelers' discusses the possibility that pilgrims on the continent and in the Near East might have inscribed their heraldry onto surfaces at shrines and on the road with the intention of creating what he refers to as a 'high exposure demonstration of the need for immortality' (2001: 3). Kraak equates heraldic markings with votive acts and also competition among wealthy families on the pilgrim trail. By rendering a symbol of their identities in stone at a holy site, the pilgrims hoped to gain immortality both for their soul and their worldly achievements. Kraak's work therefore constitutes a rare attempt to link acts of inscription to their physical and historical context of creation.

Kraak's study isolates possible authorship for the images that provides the starting point for his enquiry into acts of inscription in sacred space. The following section will explore possible relationships between pilgrimage and graffiti, focusing upon images etched at the Despenser Mausoleum in Tewkesbury Abbey. Although Kraak's work is the inspiration for this enquiry, an attempt will be made to move beyond the explanations that he offers for the presence of images such as heraldic shields. The meanings that this study attributes to Tewkesbury's medieval graffiti are formed on the basis of the nature of medieval Catholicism in England and will consider the images and ideals that were important to the English pilgrim and how these might be played out within the sacred space of the church.

Graffiti in Tewkesbury Abbey

The presence of pilgrims implies a spiritual focus that could draw visitors to the church from a distance. Tewkesbury Abbey possessed a statue of Our Lady that was a well known focal point for worship (Lindley 2003). It was also close to Hailes Abbey and its famed Holy Blood. The decision to focus upon Tewkesbury rather than a more prominent shrine such as St. Wulfstan at Worcester, the Holy Blood at Hailes or St. Cantilupe at Hereford was formed on the basis of the variety of images with possible sacral connotations that survive here. The church building was bought by the parishioners following the dissolution of the abbey and, like Gloucester, has been better maintained than most former abbey churches. The majority of the images that are discussed here are located around the Despenser Mausoleum at the east end of Tewkesbury Abbey, which was remodeled in the early 14th century in line with the ambitions of the Despenser Family. In this part of the abbey there are a number of fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth century memorials positioned in the radiating chapels and niches and around the high altar (Figure 5.1). The majority of graffiti are located between the chapel of St. Edmund the Martyr and the High Altar, an area of soft carvable limestone that incorporates the so called Wakeman Cenotaph cadaver and the effigies of Hugh, fifth Baron Despenser and his wife Elizabeth. The Despenser families' involvement in the beautification of the east end of Tewkesbury Abbey can be seen as an unequivocal statement of the family's piety and of their devotion to the abbey church. However, it may have been intended to enhance their mortal status as well. The family's fourteenth century history is noted for political strife and dubious claims to wealth and power. Hugh the Younger, in particular, is known for having maneuvered himself into the favour of Edward II, gaining landholdings through violence and tyranny and a particularly nasty execution. The Despenser Mausoleum was built as the family sought to repair its reputation, and included high vaulted tombs with delicate stonework that rivalled the tomb of Edward II at Gloucester Cathedral. The Despenser connection would not necessary have been enough to distance others from this part of the church, the most sacred part of the abbey. Indeed, the people of Tewkesbury are known to have been particularly attached to the building, which they purchased in 1539 as their parish church rather than see it destroyed.

Recognising a medieval graffito can be problematic. It is not difficult to establish the *terminus post quem* for which an image could have been inscribed, as this is given by the date of the writing surface. However, the inscriptions rarely include a date and as yet there has been no formal attempt to establish a chronology by any other means. The quantity of markings that currently survive are probably a small proportion of the number that existed prior to the sixteenth century. The painted plaster that once covered the walls of the England's medieval churches has mostly been lost. It is likely that markings in this medium were lost with the plaster. Violet Pritchard identifies the surviving imagery on the basis of its form, which is predominantly pictorial, rather than textual. Some texts are known, such as the famous graffiti from St. Mary's Church in Ashwell, Sussex, which dates from the time of the Black Death:

> *Pestile (n) cia M.C.T.(er)x penta miseranda ferox violenta (discessit pestis) superset plebs pessima testis in fine qevent(us) (erat)* valid(us) (...h)oc anno maurus in orbe tonat MCCCLXI.
>
> *[There was a plague 1000, three times 100, five times 10, a pitiable, fierce violent (plague departed);*

a wretched populace survives to witness and in the end a mighty wind, Maurus, thunders in this year in the world, 1361.] (Dickens 1967: 182).

This graffiti was on the exterior of the church. Textual graffiti that include a pre-reformation date are extremely rare. There is a notable absence of 'tags', the most basic and familiar form of graffiti that identifies the artist by name or initials and sometimes gives a date. There are many post-medieval examples of tags in the abbey, but none that predate the Reformation. Therefore, in order to identify a medieval graffito it is necessary to rely on a combination of style, situation, frequency of occurrence and comparison of marks within a particular space and between comparable locations at different churches.

At Tewkesbury, seventeenth and eighteenth century inscriptions with signatures and dates are commonly found covering the east end of the church. But rather than suggesting that they were made out of devotion, they cover medieval memorials, such as that honouring the life Abbot William Parker, in a manner that suggests indifference or even disdain. There are other churches with post-medieval graffiti where this has demonstrably been the case. For example, at St. Mary de Haura in New Shoreham, large numbers of similar graffiti were carved into the southeast piers in the choir around the year 1669. It has been suggested that these were carved by dissenting members of the parish who departed shortly afterwards to found a Puritan settlement in America (Standing 2006). Whether or not this was actually the case, such markings are very much 'of this world', giving permanence to an identity that is separate from its surrounding, not reverential to them. Sometimes the dates are enclosed in small houses or churches, as if to physically set them apart from their context. Many of these 'enclosed' tags exist around the choir at Gloucester Cathedral. This suggests that the distinction between medieval images and post-medieval textual graffiti in the most eastern areas of the church might be regarded as a contrast between marks that speak to God and those that are aimed at a mortal audience; the solicitation of Divine assistance against a worldly statement of identity. The earliest tags date to the late sixteenth century, suggesting that the change appears to come about at the time of the Reformation, but with no solid dates for the medieval markings and a dearth of detailed enquiries this cannot be stated with accuracy.

Forms of Graffiti at Tewkesbury

Graffiti at Tewkesbury, as in other English churches, can be divided into three categories. The first and most numerous groups are religious images, predominantly crosses, which appear to be concentrated around the far eastern end of the church. The situation of medieval graffiti around the sacral eastern end of the church is also notable at Gloucester, Worcester, Ely and Lincoln Cathedrals wherein the nave is largely devoid of scratches, with the exception of mason's markings.

At Lincoln Cathedral, medieval graffiti can be found behind the Angel Choir, mixed with later examples (Figure 5.2). At Gloucester the furthest western extent of the imagery is marked by a knotted votive cross inscribed close to the northeast end of the high altar (Figure 5.3). A similar example has been noted by Salmon (1905) at The Church of St. Mary de Haura in New Shoreham. But the majority of scratched images at Gloucester are much less sophisticated. Simple crosses cover the limestone behind the high altar, marking the presence of numerous different hands (Figure 5.4). Similar crosses litter the limestone of the chapels to the east of the high altar at Ely Cathedral. This tendency to focus upon areas around the sacred eastern end of the church is particularly clear at Worcester Cathedral. Here there is a large concentration of graffiti on Prince Arthur's Chantry, including many crosses, but other than these, the building is largely devoid of carvings (Figure 5.5). It is possible that much original graffiti was removed in antiquity. In the mid sixteenth century, Worcester Cathedral was thoroughly stripped of its Catholic paraphernalia by a zealous clergy (MacCulloch 1998). The absence of graffiti elsewhere may be an indication of its perceived sacral implications. Such devotions would have been regarded with distain by reforming figures such as Bishop Barlow of Worcester Cathedral and Bishop Hooper of Gloucester Cathedral. Prince Arthur's Chantry might well have escaped the purge as a result of its familial connections to the Tudor dynasty and therefore it is this structure alone that preserves the connection between medieval graffiti and the east end of the church.

5.2 Examples of medieval graffiti behind the Angel Choir at Lincoln Cathedral.

5.3 A knotted votive cross to the north-east of the High Altar at Gloucester Cathedral.

5.4 Scratched crosses in the limestone at Gloucester.

5.5 Prince Arthur's Chantry at Worcester Cathedral.

The second category of imagery is representational and depicts subjects that are drawn from the author's environment and experience. Only two instances of representational graffiti were recorded at Tewkesbury and both were located in the nave. Neither image appears to have any overt religious meaning. On a pier towards the eastern end of the south aisle, a bird and a goat or sheep have been scratched into the stone at eye level. The purpose of this is unclear. F.C. Wood has commented on similar graffiti at New Shoreham and is of the opinion that such imagery was entirely prosaic:

> *My own opinion, based on the examination and recording of hundreds of medieval graffiti from all over the country, is that the pictorial graffiti seldom had any esoteric meaning attached to them and were usually concerned with everyday scenes with which the medieval artist was familiar (Wood 2002).*

This may also be said of the animal images of Tewkesbury that do not seem to have any purpose beyond that which is immediately observable, to record some aspect of the environment that has interested the author. The nave was the area of the medieval church which was reserved for the laity and was also used for secular activities such as meetings, markets and business transactions. It is therefore appropriate that such images should be found here rather than further east within alongside imagery that potentially had a ritual purpose, as noted above.

The third category of imagery is that which specifically relates the identity of its maker to an assumed audience. Carved, scratched and painted remembrances of the individual, such as the heraldic devices discussed by Kraak (2001) were a familiar sight in the medieval church. The social and economic organisation of a community was reflected in and reaffirmed by the public display of heraldic devices around the church, exemplified by the arms held by the angels in the nave at Cirencester, which commemorate the dignitaries who contributed to the rebuilding of the nave in the fifteenth century. The many brasses erected at Cirencester in the middle ages, such as that of Richard Dixton, a Yorkist knight who also founded a chantry chapel within the church, are further evidence that although the medieval church was a communal space, some personalities made themselves visible. The practice of scratching personal marks may be regarded as another manifestation of this, giving place and permanence to the identities of those whose position within the congregation was less visible. There are few surviving heraldic marks at Tewkesbury that might fall within this category (Figure 5.6), rather the majority are more elaborate and have seventeenth and eighteenth century dates (Figure 5.7). However, at Lincoln Cathedral there are several, all of which are concentrated around the east end of the abbey church, near to the tomb of Bishop Hugh. These marks are simple with no motto, supporters or crest and have no date written alongside. Moreover, they are divided into only two or three sections, distinguishing them from later markings. They are relatively inconspicuous, which seems to suggest that the intention of the author was not to be noticed, but to make a personal mark that would give permanence to their identity within a Holy space.

Distinguishing Between Graffiti and Masons Marks

Seemingly prosaic statements of identity were present in the medieval church in the form of masons' marks. Few studies have examined the different types of masons marks found in the medieval church. Medieval masons marked stones so that their work could be checked by a master mason. No register of these marks survives (Brookes 1961:5). A short volume by Brookes (1961) details masons marks in York Minster. However, he notes that there exists no contemporary record of these markings that allows for the possibility that they had other meanings attached to them and that some are not mason's marks at all. For example, J. Paul Rylands (1910) made reference to similar mason's marks in a paper on medieval personal markings, but linked them to a desire among individuals engaged in commerce but not entitled to bear arms to leave some trace of their identity within the church. Some of the markings highlighted by these authors might actually have had a votive, as opposed to commercial purpose. Crosses are particularly problematic, as they might be masons marks or votive inscriptions and so fall under either of these headings. The presence of many examples on a single stone might imply a sacral motive rather than a tradesman's mark. However, where a single cross is depicted it is difficult to be certain whether the intention was to mark the contribution of an individual tradesman or a pilgrim's plea. Where form is ambiguous, context is the best guide for informing the meaning of such signs.

Why Might Medieval Pilgrims Have Left Marks?

In examining the connections between graffiti and travel in medieval Europe, Kraak (2001:1) suggests that it was considered good practice for seekers of honour to attach their coat of arms, or a tablet of wood or piece of paper displaying such devices, to the walls of inns, lodgings and eve sacral destinations. Kraak links such self-made heraldic displays to competition among the wealthy armorial classes. However, there are other reasons why a personal mark might be left at a sacred location. Heraldic imagery, crosses and other forms of representation left in religious spaces can also be regarded as votives, prayers or intercessory pleas, or simply representations of an individuals' desire to maintain a presence within a holy place that might help to save their soul. Connections between graffiti and intercession have been cited by researchers working in many different contexts. Muscat (2000) has proposed a link between the inscription of ship graffiti by mariners in 6th century Malta and the need for assistance and reassurance before long voyages. More pertinent to this study are the connections where Bushnell (1990) has highlighted correspondences between Kiev's medieval church graffiti and a desire for assistance and intercession amongst visitors. He explicitly refers to these markings as instances of worship, intended to put the writer in direct communication with God. However, he also affirms the fact that such acts were contextually unique. The motivations of votaries visiting Kiev's holy

5.6 Crests scratched onto the Wakeman Cenotaph.

5.7 Examples of dated post-medieval graffiti at Tewkesbury.

places were not the same as those of the Tarxien mariners or those of the English medieval pilgrim. The concept of votive graffiti provides a useful model, but must be tailored to the context in question because the motivation behind each act will depend upon the religious, economic and social situation of the author as well as the sacral context of the location.

When medieval pilgrims traveled to shrines, they did so in search of salvation, often returning with tokens of their visit that would enable them to remain close to the saint whose shrine they had visited. For example, visitors to the shrine of St. Thomas a Beckett at Canterbury could purchase ampullae, small lead phials of Holy water, allegedly mixed with the blood and brains of Beckett. These souvenirs might also include tokens or badges that could be kept close to the person in order to maintain an intimate relationship with the saint. Blick (2001) describes a tin ampulla made before 1220, with an image of Becket's miracles on the side. Blick's example is particularly interesting as she notes that the imagery present on the ampulla corresponds with that of the stained glass at Canterbury. By carrying the phial close to the body, perhaps around the neck or sewn into a hat, the pilgrim maintained a relationship with the saint, their shrine and the fabric of the church.

Parallels might be drawn between the carrying of an ampulla, relic or token and the act of inscribing a symbol in a sacred place. Both represent attempts to create a personal relationship with a sacred person and place. Both are personal acts of devotion that are important to the spirituality of the individual, rather than evidence of some desire to gain social credibility through retaining an association with a sacred place. As has been noted, medieval acts of inscription appear to have been relatively inconspicuous. The scratched crosses at Tewkesbury and Gloucester are only visible on careful inspection and do not attract attention from any great distance. A souvenir taken from a shrine might be similarly inconspicuous and private, purchased to be carried under clothing and out of sight, evidence of personal devotion rather than public worship. Tokens and relics could thus be taken away and votive inscriptions left behind to preserve an intimate relationship between pilgrim and saint.

Continuity of Votive Acts beyond the Reformation

Although the majority of graffiti that post-date the Reformation appear to be textual, there are some surviving graphic images. At Lincoln Cathedral there are a number of inscribed images of ships in the Angel Choir, the morphology of which suggests an eighteenth century date (Figure 5.8). One of the boats even has an inscribed date to back this up. These are significant because they may

5.8 Ship graffiti at Lincoln Cathedral.

constitute evidence that instances of votive inscription continued beyond the mid sixteenth century when pilgrimage was proscribed in England.

The Lincoln ships are representations of real vessels. The detail accorded to them suggests an object that has been observed in the real world, rather than an abstract conception of a ship, which might perhaps represent the Church as a vessel or a Biblical image such as Noah's Ark, as might be expected if the images were votive abstractions. There are more abstract images at Lincoln that may also be ships of an earlier date. However, despite the obvious differences in form, the reasons why these images were carved here may not be entirely dissimilar. Representations of ships have been identified in sacred places by researchers working in different contexts. For example, in his analysis of the 6th century Tarxien ship graffiti in Malta, John Muscat asserted that, since the images were all located in sacred places, the graffiti must represent ex-voto offerings by mariners rendered out of gratitude or as insurance against perils at sea. Waterborne trade had an important role to play in the early growth of the city of Lincoln, which might suggest that its imagery was created for similar reasons. The city of Lincoln is located two hundred feet above sea level astride a gap in the Jurassic limestone escarpment through which the River Witham flows, and commanding the shortest sea passage to the trading centres of Europe. For much of its history, the Foss Dyke has been a conduit for trade in and out of the city. By the fourteenth century the city was losing its pre-eminence as a trading centre owing to the tendency of both the river and the Foss Dyke to silt up and hinder the passage of larger ships. In 1762 a bill was passed that handed control of the Foss Dyke to the nearby town of Boston, effectively ending Lincoln's waterborne trade. A tempting argument is that the Lincoln ships were carved as ex-voto images by individuals connected with the maritime industry. The tenuousness of Lincoln's maritime fortunes might even have encouraged individuals to seek out divine favour in assurance of their own safety and continued prosperity in local trade. Unfortunately, the nature of graffiti is such that authorship and intention can never be asserted without question. Nevertheless, the presence of the images in a town with historical connections to waterborne trade is suggestive of a relationship between devotion and mariners. If such graffiti were identified in churches in other seafaring towns in Britain then such an interpretation might be more strongly made.

Church graffiti has not received the attention from scholars that it deserves. Its ubiquity and variety have the potential to provide valuable insights into the way that people in the past experienced medieval sacred space. The foregoing discussion has demonstrated how the form and location of carvings in churches and cathedrals might help to clarify otherwise intangible uses of religious space by people whose historical presence is fleeting and insubstantial. These marks traverse the line between tokens and souvenirs and the fixed devotional relics of the medieval church, such as wall paintings. Like the former, they are very personal and served to create a direct relationship between the individual and divinity. However, they are also static and fixed into public space and so provide enduring evidence of that relationship for all to see. The study of church graffiti thus provides an opportunity to identify individual voices within the communality of the medieval church, giving further insight into the importance of personal acts of devotion in the affirmation of faith. The marks need to be considered alongside other material aspects of the medieval religious experience, both fixed and portable. More recent graffiti, such as the seventeenth century ship graffiti at Lincoln, can provide indications of how the use of church space has changed since the sixteenth century. It suggests both continuity and change in practices of votive inscription from the medieval and early modern period and as such also merits further study.

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Signs of the Times: Nineteenth – Twentieth Century Graffiti in the Farms of the Yorkshire Wolds

Katherine Giles and Melanie Giles

Introduction

This paper is concerned with graffiti found in farm buildings on the Yorkshire Wolds, dating between the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. It uses an archaeological approach to explore the social and performative nature of these inscriptions, to analyse their content and character, and to consider the communities responsible for their creation. We argue that this was a vital medium of expression for a particular group of farm-workers – the horselads – and was part of the way in which they negotiated their status and identity during a period of great social upheaval and agricultural change (Giles and Giles 2007). We situate the making of these marks within the horselads' seasonal rhythms of labour and broader patterns of inhabitation. Finally, we explore spatial and stratigraphic relationships associated with graffiti panels, to elucidate different groups within these communities, and analyse how they changed over time.

The Farming Landscape: From the Nineteenth - Twentieth Centuries

The case study with which we are concerned consists of a series of farms located on the 'High Wolds', straddling the borders of East and North Yorkshire. The landscape is defined by an elevated ridge of chalk – the Yorkshire Wolds – which rises on the River Humber, curving in a north-easterly direction, to outcrop at Flamborough Head (Kent 1980). In the north-west corner of this chalk massif, the landscape is characterised by flat Wold tops, dissected by steep dry valleys or dales (Foster 1987). Its northern edge is defined by a steep scarp edge, prone to landslip, which overlooks the parish and estate of Birdsall: the centre of our case study area. As the chalk dipslope falls and flattens towards the east, the topography is more gentle (Leatham, cited in Woodward 1985: 34), with shallow valleys or 'slacks' cut by seasonally-active streams known as 'Gypseys' (Bevan 1999). To the north, the Wolds are defined by the Vale of Pickering; to the south, the Vale of Holderness; and to the west, the Vale of York. These vales are flatter and wetter, with long histories of extensive drainage, from the late medieval period onwards (Catt 1987; Van der Noort and Ellis 1995).

The soils of the Wolds are thin, light and loamy, occasionally overlain by patches of clay with flint and fed by springs and small streams (Furness and King 1978; Ellis 1990). In the historic period, they were used for sheep-pasture and rabbit warrens (Harris 1960; Waites 1971). Colluvial activity has enriched the bases of valleys and slope-sides, creating areas more suited for small-scale arable cultivation, around nucleated settlements (Harris 1961). However, from the eighteenth century onwards, pressure to 'improve' the land and intensify both arable cultivation and the stocking and feeding of cattle (Hayfield 1998), led to what was described locally as a 'rage of ploughing' (Harris 1996: see Giles and Giles 2007 for a brief consideration of the different historical factors involved in this transformation). Such a shift was hindered by the need to marl and fertilise the thin, chalk soils to grow crops successfully, as well as provide additional surface water for stock. This latter aspect was redressed by the introduction of dewponds (Best 1930; Harris 1996; Hayfield and Brough 1987; Hayfield and Wagner 1995). Meanwhile, the increase in arable cultivation was managed through either the expansion of existing farms or the creation of new ones in more isolated areas, effectively to act as 'manure factories' (Hayfield 1991). A central fold-yard acted as a repository for manure gathered from both over-wintered cattle and the horse-teams stabled around the yard, who were needed for ploughing (Caunce 1991a). Following the winter, the cattle were turned out on the land, and the resulting mix of rotted manure and bedding could be spread across surrounding fields (Day 1985). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this was supplemented by artificial or bought-in fertilizers, but the underlying viability of the farm rested on this renewable resource.

Its success also rested on an expanding farming community needed to manage this system. Many farmers were tied into tenancy agreements with major farms or estate centres, such as Birdsall or Sledmere. Tenant farmers, known locally as 'hinds', increasingly took over the day-to-day management of the land, as well as responsibility for the labourers under their supervision (Hayfield 1998). On most farms, this community consisted of a shepherd, a stockman (know as the 'beastman' or 'bullocky') and the 'horselads': a group of young men who cared for and worked with the Shire and Clydesdale teams of horses, used for ploughing, carting and carrying (Brown 1991; Caunce 1991b). In addition, there would normally be at least one female servant to assist the farmer or hind's wife in the carrying out of domestic duties. Seasonally, this community might be swelled by additional labour for the harvest, including both Irish migrant workers (Gatenby 1948; Perkins 1976) and the local itinerant tramps and vagrants, known as 'Wold Rangers' (Antrim 1981).

The status of these different groups was structured by, and reflected in, the accommodation in which they were housed (Giles and Giles 2007). A main farmhouse, or (in the case of a larger estate), a separate 'Hind House', was occupied by the farmer and his immediate family, as well as the female domestic servants (as for example, at Vessey Pastures, Hayfield 1998). A dormitory room housed the horselads, whilst adjacent cottages or caravans might be provided for the beastmen and shepherds (Hayfield 1994). Somewhere within the farm complex, a small warming room with a grate, or kitchen with a range, was provided for the men to sit in at night, referred to as a 'slum' or 't'kip' (Neave 1971; Caunce 1991a: 163). As we have argued elsewhere, aspects of age, status and gender were carefully controlled by restricted access to areas such as the female servants' accommodation, and the use of separate entrances (Giles and Giles 2007). This was important, since the horselads lived closely alongside the farmer's family, and were 'meated in' for the year, following the Martinmas hirings (November 23rd): fed by the hind or farmer's wife, often eating at the same table (Caunce 1991a).

Whilst agricultural production was indeed increased, concern was expressed about the impact of this system upon the land. From the eighteenth century onwards, continual improvements were tried in the form of drainage, deeper ploughing and the addition of new types of fertilizer, as well as crop rotation (Young 1770; Marshall 1788; Strickland 1812). Inevitably, broader historical events and processes also took their toll. The Agricultural Depression of the 1880s, two World Wars, and the advent of mechanisation, all wrought great transformations in the demands made upon farmers, as well as the technology and workforce they used to accomplish it (Day 1985; Howorth 2002). The discussion below will try to situate graffiti within the context of these historical changes, to understand how the practice of wall writing was negotiated and reproduced at the local level.

The overall impact of such change has been to render many farm buildings redundant, as the communities have dwindled to a single family or individual tractor driver (Hayfield 1988, 1998). In the twenty-first century, rapid changes in agricultural policy and subsidy, and the demands of diversification, have further affected the farming economy of the region. As a result, most of the structures in which we have located graffiti are becoming ruins: whilst some have been converted or pillaged for materials, others have been demolished to avoid dangers of unstable masonry (Giles and Giles 2007). Since the graffiti is commonly found inscribed onto white plaster walls, these are especially vulnerable to damp, moss and mould. There is thus an archaeological imperative to record this material, before both graffiti and buildings disappear completely.

Methodology and Case Studies

The first stage of fieldwork consisted of a selective survey of buildings on the Birdsall estate in order to identify initial case studies. The farms of Foxhouse, Wharram Percy, Burdale Wold and Towthorpe were identified as having high research potential. A second phase consisted of creating a simple photographic record of the buildings, and interior panels of graffiti, as well as the selective transcription of passages of text, to evaluate their interpretative potential. The third phase of the project, begun in 2006, has initiated a systematic recording methodology at four levels:

1. Reflectorless Electronic Distance Meter survey of the buildings are being used to produce scaled ground plans and elevations, in which panels of graffiti are located in relation to architectural details such as doorways, stairs and windows.
2. A full photographic record (in both colour and black-and-white) is made of the buildings, as well as internal and external details. Each wall panel is photographed, enhanced by close-ups of individual graffiti designs and texts, comprising an illustrative catalogue.
3. Elevations of each wall panel, at a scale of 1:10, provide the context for individual photographs, and provide a full transcription of text and images.
4. A final level of recording is reserved for important passages of text and images: selective tracings of these are made using acetate overlays, to capture details of style and hand.

As we have previously argued, since this recording system requires interpretation in the field, it enables us to identify important relationships between groups of images or pieces of text, which can be targeted for enhanced recording (Giles and Giles 2007). All of the examples discussed below derive from these four locations. However, once recording at these sites is complete, it is our intention to identify other examples within the estate, and the region more generally.

Results: Location and Characterisation

The four case studies analysed so far differ subtly in terms of location and character. At Towthorpe, most of the graffiti is incised with a knife blade and is restricted to a tack room (for horse-gear) and stable-block, within the yard opposite the main farmhouse. At Burdale Wold and Foxhouse, pencil graffiti is found on the walls of first-floor granaries, and both of these buildings are separate from the main hind and farm house (respectively). Meanwhile, at Wharram Percy, pencil-drawn graffiti is located in a small store-room above a wagon-shed and a first-floor granary (both within the same building range), again located a short distance from the farmhouse.

Whilst blue pencil or chalk is found on the walls at Wharram Percy, red and blue have been used at Burdale Wold. Most of the graffiti however, is drawn in grey, graphite pencil. In addition to the sharp, knife-blade incisions at Towthorpe, there are also deep decorative scratches and deliberate, defacing dents in the plaster at a number of locations, suggesting the rare use of a blunter tool or edge.

In terms of location, what these case studies have in common is that graffiti is clustered around doors and windows, or hatched openings around pulleys: where sacks were lifted in and out of the barns. It suggests that

6.1 'This was the waterline on the stooks' (Foxhouse).

the graffiti-makers were selecting areas of good light to work in. A notable exception to this is the graffiti hidden in darker recesses at the backs of barns, which may have been meant for more restricted viewing (see below). In addition, farm-workers may have clustered around such openings, when they were taking breaks from work, within these buildings. At Wharram Percy, one example of graffiti notes that they were 'mixing seed corn' whilst at Foxhouse, another mentions they were '…ing the Foldyard' [clearing or cleaning?]. In addition, they may have been holed up in such rooms during periods of rain and snow, or winter evenings: keeping warm, keeping an eye on the weather, and watching comings-and-goings on the farm.

At Foxhouse in particular, individual comments support the idea that graffiti was often made when they were prevented from working. Comments include: 'Not a sheafe gotten: Pissing Wet time. Been weeks rain' and 'Threshing no good. Rain very good'. One small cartoon depicts a harvested field, with a line drawn across stacked bundles of corn, annotated 'This was the waterline on the stooks' (Figure 6.1). Support for this interpretation comes from a biography of John Clare, which quotes from his boyhood reminiscences of visiting an isolated 'heath house' that was 'disinhabited and in ruins' (Bate 2003: 54) (Since he was born in 1793, this event would date to c. 1800). Local children crept in to examine 'the walls [that] were riddled all over with names and dates of shepherds and herdsmen in their idle hours when they crept under its shelter from showers in summer and storms in winter' (in Bate 2003: 54-55; Paul Stamper, pers.comm.).

We have previously argued that the majority of the graffiti was made by the horselads: the group of young men charged with ploughing, sowing, harvesting and carting, on the farms (Giles and Giles 2007). However, as this paper will make clear, contributions were also made by other individuals like the shepherds and beastmen, who entered these buildings whilst storing farm equipment and stacking grain, taking shelter from bad weather, or socialising in the few hours left to them, at the end of the working day.

Graffiti and the Making of Communities

Working in and around deserted buildings, archaeologists frequently encounter graffiti left not only by its original occupants, but by much more recent users of these structures. Since it is commonly perceived as part of a counter-normative or 'deviant' behaviour, graffiti can easily be dismissed as vandalism (Othen-Price 2006): an act of defacement that should be erased (Home Office 2003). Yet such inscriptions are an integral part of a site's history, and should at least be recorded if they are to be removed, since one era's scrawl becomes the next generation's written testimony of 'unheard' voices. The graffiti of trysting couples, underage drinkers, drug-users, tag-artists, pagans and tourists have equally important stories to tell (see Blain and Wallis 2004) alongside the scribbles of inmates in prisons, factory workers and soldiers holed up in trenches and bunkers (as exemplified in Cocroft et al 2006). In our own case studies, graffiti from the late nineteenth-century is frequently found alongside initials, dates and comments from the last few decades. For the reasons given above, all inscriptive marks have been accorded equal importance in our recording, regardless of date

Scholarly studies of graffiti support this interpretive strategy, since inscriptions were seen somewhat differently in the past, as part of a general 'writing art' (Abel and Buckley 1977, Reisner 1971). At its most basic, such graffiti conveyed the message 'I was here': establishing the presence of a particular individual or group, in a certain place, at a specific time (Fleming 2001; Jones-Baker 1993; Plesch 2002). Studies in this volume and elsewhere suggest that the adding of a specific date or year to someone's initials becomes increasingly common from the eighteenth century onwards. This may relate to growing literacy, but it may also indicate the intention of an author to record their presence there at a key moment – personal or historical. In addition, it may indicate an intention to revisit or return to the site in the future, whereby the dated graffiti became both a material mnemonic and record of time that had passed.

Sociological studies emphasise the way in which graffiti can

be used to covertly express proscribed views or opinions (Gonos et al 1976). Equally it can be used as a form of resistance: to 'anonymously' yet publicly denounce social or political hegemony, or question dominant values (Peet 1996). Even in these cases, a pseudonymous 'tag' may be used to denote authorship. Much depends on context: who sees it, where, and in what circumstances. Indeed, the very content and form of graffiti is often modified according to the function of the structures on which it is inscribed (Landy and Steele 1967). Graffiti can therefore be a powerful self-referential discourse used to construct and reproduce identity, especially amongst young men in urban or rural communities (MacDonald 2002). However, the placement of signs and texts can also be used strategically to discomfort, disturb or intimidate an area's residents, targeting aspects of identity such as ethnic origin, gender or religious affiliation (Stamp 1987; Jarman 1993).

How does graffiti help construct communities, both in the present and the past? The making of it involves a series of habitualised gestures that can be read by those watching, as evidence of an individual's identity and skill (see Bourdieu 1977). In terms of our case study of the Yorkshire Wolds farms, it was not simply the literacy and good 'hand' of the horselads that was under scrutiny, but also their wit and humour, and the ability to give an idea amusing or entertaining, graphic form. This went hand-in-hand with storytelling or musical skills, which were vital amongst a close-knit group whose leisure hours were few, and perhaps at times, mundane:

> *...it was a poor gawk who couldn't knock a tune out of a mouth organ or give a song to pass away the evening (Kitchen 1983: 59-60).*

Alongside physical strength, hardiness, and competence with animals and machinery, such social and creative skills were greatly valued. Within the farm graffiti, visual punning and colourful stereotypes are therefore complemented by rare attempts at realism, especially in relation to animals (horses, sheep and dogs at Burdale Wold, Foxhouse and Wharram Percy, Giles and Giles 2007: figure 6) and vehicles (such as a threshing set at Wharram Percy, Figure 6.2, tank at Towthorpe and aircraft typology at Burdale Wold, Figure 6.3). For farm-workers who generally left school in their early teens, these scribbles called to mind the schoolroom, and familiar gestures of drawing and writing. The vertical plane of these walls may therefore have brought the school blackboard to mind, but these boys and men were still improvising with an unfamiliar 'canvas' and novel surfaces of limewash. Graffiti-making was a performance then: often involving bold or enlarged gestures, to make it readable. It took vision, to execute large or complex designs, or to position text and image at eye-level, to catch the attention of viewers close-up. Even such a mundane activity was fraught with small-scale politics, since the inscription of text always involves 'a struggle about who can get what inscribed' (Howe 2000: 65). The density of images discussed below indicate that such marks were subsequently scrutinised closely by one's peers, and – since they were permanent – were subject to approval or derision through the work of later graffitists. We will argue that adding to existing panels of text or images therefore involved an embodied performance that was risky and daring (cf. Butler 1993), since it could enhance or mar an individual's standing within this intimate group.

The graffiti that survived defacement or erasure is an indication of the values and feelings that were regarded as legitimate or appropriate, in a continuing process of 'subversion and revision' by later generations (Howe 2000: 65). The density and frequency of these marks suggest that either the Hinds turned a blind eye to this practice, or that their control over their employees was weakened in such spaces. Alternatively, they may have appreciated some of its contents, especially if they had worked their way up the hierarchy to reach this post, and made their own mark on other walls. There is certainly a notable sense of pleasure and accomplishment in some of the designs: particularly the sweeping curve of thatched pikes and ploughs at Foxhouse and Burdale Wold: reiteratively cut or drawn, as if attempting the perfect symmetrical silhouette (Figure 6.4). Whilst we have argued elsewhere this may indicate frustration at being prevented from ploughing or stacking by wet weather (Giles and Giles 2007), they may also have been drawn at harvest time - the turn of the agricultural cycle - as a subtle mark of pride, achievement or tutelage of the younger lads. Another key design that is repeated at most of the sites is the daisywheel: comprising six petals enfolded in a circle. Once learned, it was an easy but impressive design to execute, and in its own way, marked a small rite of passage for young men within the group, learning such visual 'tricks'. However, according to Easton (1999), the hexafoil daisywheel also had apotropaeic connotations: representing the sun and its vitality. Since it was traditionally used to protect buildings, especially the home (Easton 1991), it may well have been copied by these men who had seen it in local cottages and barns. This is interesting since Connerton (1989) argues that communities are frequently bound together through the sharing of common rituals, expressed in public feasts and celebrations, as well as more intimate, unspoken traditions. These key symbols – the pike, the plough and the daisywheel – may have been part of a repertoire of images that the farm-workers recognised as their own pictorial shorthand. They may have represented key events in the arable cycle; stood for values of strength, fertility and protection; or were simply pleasing patterns. But each time they were copied and inscribed anew, the horselads participated in a small ritual of belonging that affirmed and celebrated their contribution to farm-life.

Graffiti Communities

The Hierarchy of the Horselads

The earliest dated graffiti was made in 1875, at Burdale Wold, and is signed: 'William Cross 1875' ; the latest, from Wharram Percy, is signed 'J.D. ALLAN JULY 1988'. These two dates frame the period in which the majority of the graffiti was inscribed. However, at Burdale Wold, a series of large, sweeping inscriptions in red underlie the later,

6.2 A possible depiction of a threshing/thrashing set (Wharram Percy).

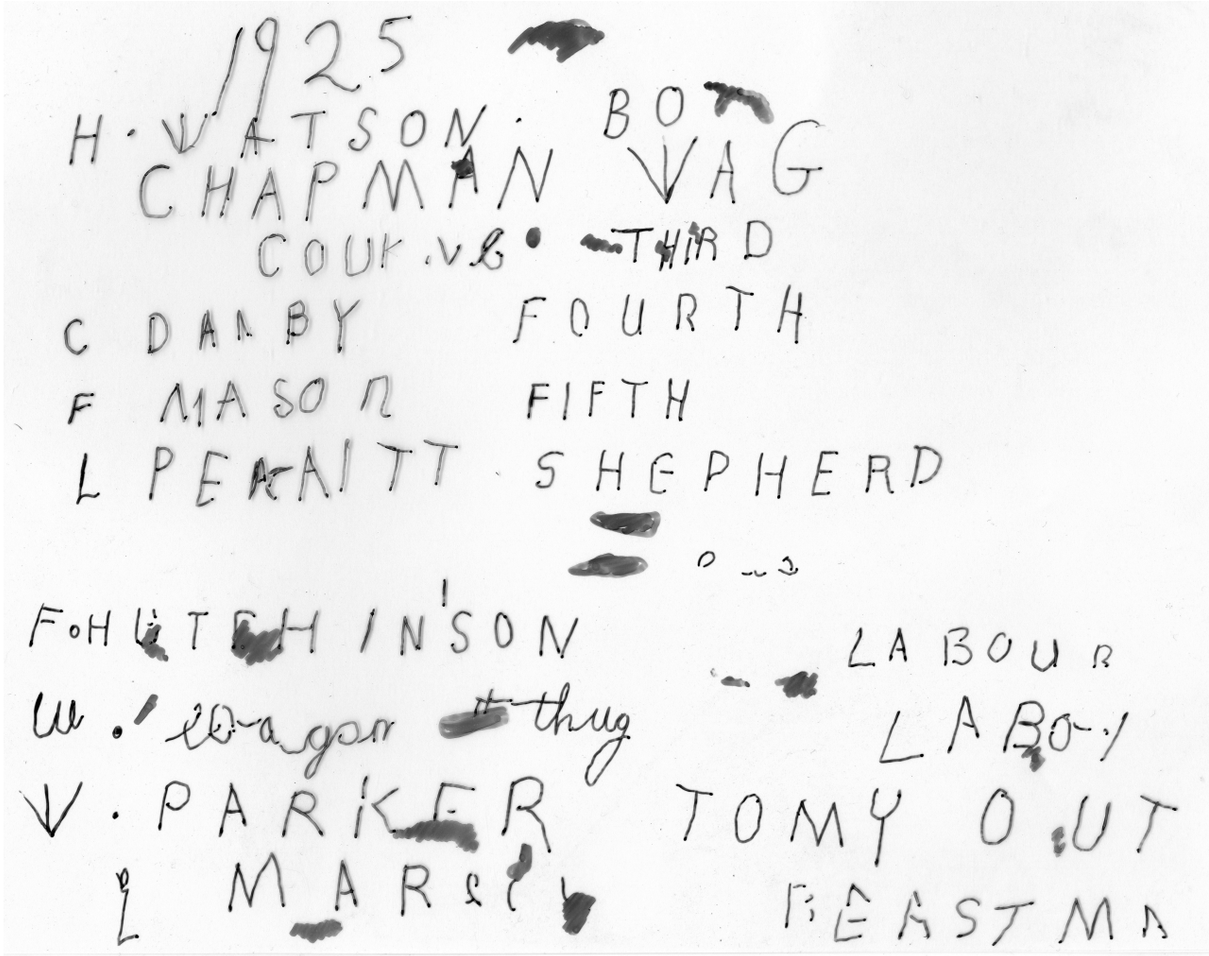
6.3 An aircraft typology (Burdale Wold).

6.4 Thatched pikes and ploughs (Towthorpe).

and neater, graphite pencil. The majority of this appears to be sinuous, looped writing: especially names and tallies, but there are a few bold pikes, with out-turned tops, and thatching depicted by criss-cross designs or parallel lines. It is possible that this earliest graffiti is not just the work of horselads but shepherds, who may have used the red 'raddle' dye from their sheep to make these designs. Certainly, Burdale Wold is associated with shepherds right through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, since there are some affectionate portraits of sheep, as well as horses (see Giles and Giles 2007: figure 6).

One of the most common pieces of graffiti found at all of the sites except Towthorpe, is a hierarchy: a roll call of names - alongside the position each individual held - which is always dated (Figure 6.5, Giles and Giles 2007: figure 8). This hierarchy dominated every aspect of their lives. Beginning with the 'Boss' (the farmer or hind: a position to which ambitious men aspired), the next line states the name of the 'Wag(g)' or 'Waggoner', whose duties on the farm included the onerous and physically demanding task of being able to 'stack, thack and carry barley' at threshing times (Caunce 1991a). Waggoner was the coveted position amongst the horselads, since he organised the working schedule, had the pick of the horse-teams and equipment, led the men to and from the farm, and set-off ploughing (in the 'fox hunting style: a peculiarity of the Wolds, Caunce 1991a: 74). It also meant that he was able to wash his hands first and sit down at the table before the other men, and got the pick of the double bedsteads (which were all shared) in the dormitory (Caunce 1991a: 83-84). Underneath him was 'Thoddy' or 'Thirdy', then 'Fowat' or 'Fourther', 'Fiver' and so on. Finally, there was the 'Wag lad' or 'least lad': often a new school-leaver of 13-14 years old, who bore the brunt of the teasing, corporal punishment and bullying by the older men.

As we have previously stated, these annually hired workers often tried to improve their position by changing farm, to gain as much experience as possible. This may explain why the hierarchies were so popular: the graffiti became an informal record of their progress up the ladder, to be seen by later horselads, working their way through the ranks. For example, at Burdale Wold in 1912, Herbert Watson is 'Wag' (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 8), but by 1925 at Wharram Percy, he was 'Boss' (Figure 6.5a). However, a second hierarchy at Wharram Percy dated 1925 suggests a complete change of staff at this farm, presumably after the hirings, since none of the names are identical. Perhaps this radical shift occasioned the commissioning of a new hierarchy, written adjacent, on the same wall (Figure 6.5b). The hierarchies are invariably in a single, good hand: possibly the most senior horselad present.



6.5a Hierarchy (Wharram Percy 1925a).

The Broader Farm Community

At both Burdale Wold and Wharram Percy, there are occasional expansions of the list. For example, the first 1925 hierarchy lists 'Shepherd' as well as two 'Labour' [Labourers?], and underneath them, 'Tomy Out' (see Figure 6.5a). 'Tommy Owt'/'Out' was an odd-job man, who generally worked with the horses but also filled in for sick or incapacitated stockmen and labourers elsewhere on the farm. Meanwhile, the second 1925 Wharram Percy hierarchy includes both '2 Shepherd', and '3 Shepherd' as well as 'Shepyad' [Sheeplad?]: suggesting a similar pecking order was being expressed to the horselad's hierarchy (Figure 6.5b). In addition, 'Beastman' is listed right at the bottom. In an adjacent room to this, the names of three 'Beastmen' were listed above a window hatch, dated 1929, and underneath, the name of a solitary 'Dairyman'. This may suggest that these stockmen had their own particular area to socialise or shelter in, at this time. A close relationship between these men and the animals with which they worked is suggested by affectionate portraits at many of the sites. Horses in harness at Wharram Percy, sheep, doves and a goose or duck at Burdale Wold, and two different dogs at Foxhouse, are all drawn in affectionate silhouette. However, we have yet to find a depiction of a cow or bull.

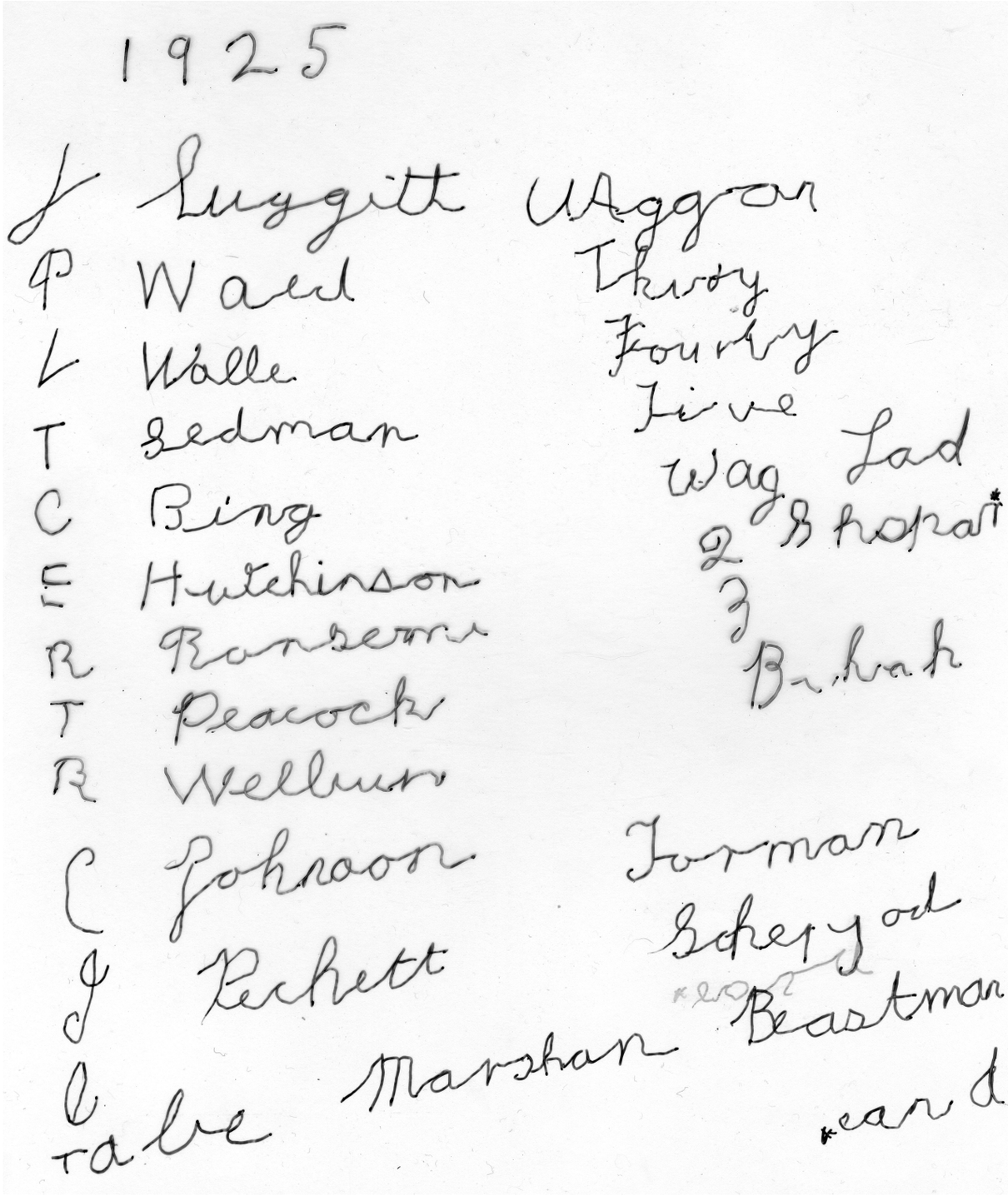
Finally, one of the Burdale Wold hierarchies dating to 1925 also seems to include several female names, one with the title 'lass wold'. They are inscribed at the end of the list and just to the left of the main text: as if an afterthought or later addition, but in the same hand.

Gender and Space: Cartoons and Rhymes

Whether the 'wold lasses' ever set foot in these spaces during this time is debatable. Much of the rest of the graffiti, both textual and graphic, suggests these were male spaces, with a strong oral culture of swearing as well as scatological and sexually explicit rhymes, ditties and songs. These verses were inscribed on the walls presumably for the entertainment of other horselads. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this kind of graffiti is often found on a back wall, away from windows and doors: presumably hidden behind sacks of corn or equipment (Giles and Giles 2007). This example from Foxhouse was similarly found on the back wall:

> *Here's health to those that drink whisky, Here's health to those that drink wine, Here's health to the prettiest lady, Who fixed up her belly to mine*

The rhyme was obviously so well known that all that was needed Burdale Wold was the first line followed by a series



6.5b Hierarchy (Wharram Percy 1925b).

of suggestive dots! There are a few silhouettes of women, including one with a beaded necklace at Burdale Wold, but other portraits (such as the 'bearded lady' named 'Lydia Durose' at Foxhouse) are rather unflattering. Marriage and sex were clearly topics of conversation and humour, as the following poem from Wharram Percy suggests:

> *Love is a feeling, a very funny feeling, a feeling that you've never felt before, a feeling that you feel, when you're going to have a feel, and a feeling that you feel for ever more.*

An earthier ditty along these lines was found on the back wall at Burdale Wold. As we have previously argued, it is not surprising that a community composed of young, unmarried men, with restricted access to the opposite sex, were preoccupied with these matters. Some of the images are clearly pornographic, showing female genitalia or couples engaged in sex. Their inscription may have been

accompanied by much bragging and banter. However, such images would also have had an important didactic role, in introducing the youngest lads to the 'facts of life' (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 10). As such, these were rooms in which important - if informal - rites of passage took place, and these men may have reflected somewhat fondly or humorously on these salacious images, in later life!

War-time Disruption

The impact of the First and Second World Wars upon these communities was considerable. During the former, a large number of horselads signed up for the 'Waggoners' Reserves' with Colonel Mark Sykes of Sledmere (Caunce 1991a: 206), and lost either their lives or livelihoods, for most of the horses that went out as sturdy carriers to the front lines, never returned (Howorth 2002). The absence of men during both wars meant that occasional labour was drafted in from the local barracks, and this may explain the presence of 'Sgt. Carr 5th Lancers' at Foxhouse. At Burdale Wold, someone has inscribed the place-name of 'Plymouth Sound', which may again indicate a war-time connection. The curious comment 'Coldstreams for Derby 1931' at the same farm may indicate an ongoing military connection - perhaps familial - during peace-time.

During both wars, these otherwise exclusively male spaces would have been frequented by women. At Foxhouse, the names of 'Edna Scott, Iris Faulknor Womens Land Army', are accompanied by two heartfelt comments: 'Threshing no good. Rain very good' and 'East, West, Homes Best' (Giles and Giles 2007: 352, 354). Whilst Land Army girls were not universally welcomed onto the farms (Howorth 2002: 87), one of them certainly made a fond impression, as someone has later scribbled next to it: 'Anyone know Edna Scott & Where is she now? Where does she come from? Write answer in square'. This graffiti not only tells us about how these communities were being transformed by larger historical events, but also that it was an interactive medium. Writers expected others to comment on or add to their scribbles, and they anticipated re-reading it at a later date. In this case, there must have also been some excitement at the hope of rekindling a connection with the past. The arrival of women into the farm workforce may have occasioned some self-censorship amongst the remaining horselads, as many of the most explicit depictions of women have scratched dents and pitting around the sensitive areas of the image (Giles and Giles 2007).

When the men did return from service, mechanisation was beginning to reduce the number of skilled horselads on the farm. Perhaps this is why so many of the hierarchies date between 1914 and 1940: since this was the period in which the system was most under threat. In addition, the traditional ranking system had broken down at the Front, where all men were 'waggoners' and wore the same uniform. Such graffiti helped re-institutionalise the hierarchy, once back on the farm (Giles and Giles 2007). Of course, these men brought back memories with them. At Towthorpe there is a carving of what appears to be a simplified landing craft, as well as a tank. There is a 'jug-eared' Kaiser at Foxhouse,

6.6 'Smoking Tommy' (Foxhouse).

as well as a 'smoking Tommy' figure (Figure 6.6) and 'drill sergeant' with baton. There is also an affectionate portrait of a soldier with epaulettes, high up on the wall at Burdale Wold. At Foxhouse however, there is a much less flattering portrait of a 'Sgt Major' figure, with greased hair, sharp teeth and flared nostrils, who is the butt of a visual pun based on the four circular medals and one cross, on his chest (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 11), which read: 'P R I † K'. These were the spaces in which men who had served in the army worked out their anger, in response to the events that had affected them.

In stark contrast, there are few indications of antagonism between individuals on the farm: tensions between them tended to be sorted out in person at the hiring fair, rather than on the farm (Caunce 1991a). As they were only paid at the year-end, immediately before the new hiring fair, it is also unlikely that the horselads men would jeopardise their annual income by being disrespectful to the Boss or Waggoner. We might expect to see growing class-consciousness beginning to affect these communities, during the twentieth century (Moses 1999): in fact, the only evidence for this comes from Wharram Percy, where the symbol of a sickle and hammer is followed by the date '20-10-25' and title: 'The Soviet Government of Wharram Percy'. Whilst this may be the humorous work of a disgruntled employee (close to the end of their year's service and waiting for their annual pay) it may indicate that

6.7 Coat-and-hat gentlemen: Lord Middleton? (Foxhouse).

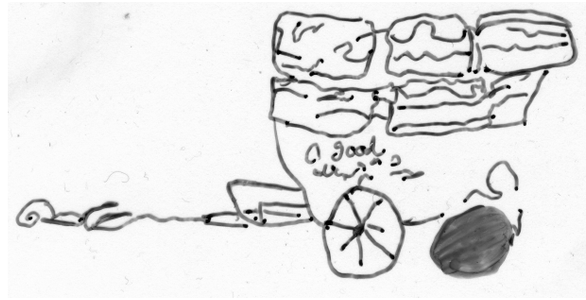
some farm workers were developing more radical political views. One poem that is repeated twice at Burdale Wold is a more generic complaint about their lot in life, which reads:

If life is a thing that runs on wheels,
Death is a thing that every man feels,
If life was a thing that money could buy,
The rich would live and the poor would die.

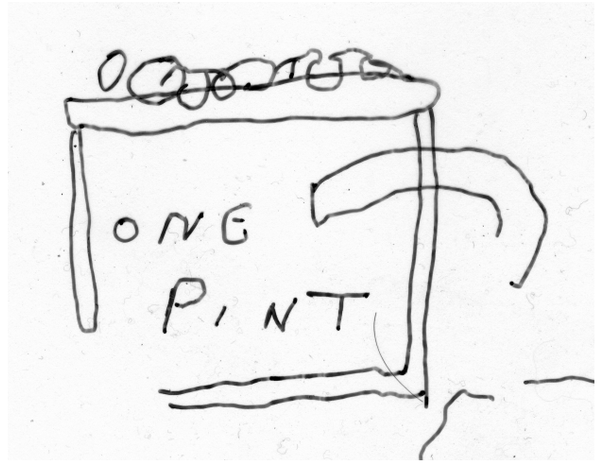
In fact, the only graffiti that seems to refer to the owner of the Birdsall estate during this time comes from Foxhouse. It is a rather respectful depiction of two well-dressed gentlemen, in long-buttoned coats (one in a flat brimmed hat, the other in a bowler), drawn as if conversing on a tour of the estate (Figure 6.7). (The name 'Middleton' seems to be inscribed underneath.) The drawing must either refer to Godfrey Willoughby, 10th Baron Middleton, or his second son, Michael Willoughby, 11th Baron Middleton, who inherited the estate in 1924, following the death of his elder brother in the First World War. He may have been held in such high esteem due to his own distinguished military career, but oral history suggests he was also deeply concerned with the welfare of his tenants and farm-workers, including the itinerant Wold Rangers (Philip Hoddy, pers. comm.).

Mechanisation

Although the basic source of power on the farms was the horse, machinery increasingly began to affect their day-to-day lives. Notably, steam-powered threshing sets were moved from farm to farm, from autumn through to the



6.8a A full wagon.



6.8b One pint (Wharram Percy).

spring, to 'thrash' the impressive thatched pikes of corn sheaves. Individual comments refer to this at Wharram Percy, where 'R. Boyes' and 'Jed Bryer'[?] declared themselves 'Thrashing kings 13th Oct 1939'. Another comment in the same room notes that the '20th April' marked the 'Last thrash'. Just along the wall from these inscriptions is the small but detailed illustration of what we take to be a threshing-set, dated 1925 (see Figure 6.2). The illustration of this machine is set near a depiction of a fully-loaded wagon, and underneath it, perhaps its reward: a brimming pint mug (Figure 6.8a and 6.8b)!

On the Yorkshire Wolds, the 'living-in' system of horselads and hinds persisted later than other regions. As a result, post-World War II agricultural change, especially the introduction of the tractor, radically transformed the make-up of these communities and the work they carried out (Whetham 1970). Contemporary hierarchies mimicked the earlier form of the rollcall, with subtle changes. At Burdale Wold, a 1922 list includes a single 'Tractor' driver, who is placed after the shepherd: perhaps denoting a lack of respect for this new machine. However, a fascinating hierarchy from Wharram Percy, dated 1941, lists 'Wag', 'Third' and 'Tomy Out', followed by a ranked hierarchy of three 'Tractor Driver' names, then 'Beast man', 'Cowy' and 'Sheeperd' [sic] (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 12). The

tractor drivers appear to have risen in status, and are seen as closely allied to the remaining horselads, with their own internal pecking order, even though they may have shared a machine.

Interestingly, the overall number of employees in this last list looks similar to earlier periods, even if their roles had changed. However, oral histories from the region indicate that many lamented the severing of relationship between man and beast (see Day 1985). Whetham even suggests that some of the first styles of tractor tried to mimic the relationship between horselad and horse (1978: 206) but notes that there was considerable doubt about the merits of these new machines well into the 1930s (ibid: 207).

Games, Play and Changes on the Farm

The final aspect of the graffiti we wish to discuss includes evidence for games. At Towthorpe, 'Merrills' boards have been inscribed onto the lid of a meal-bin as well as an adjacent windowsill, within the tack-room and stable (Giles and Giles 2007: figure 9). This popular local pastime was also known as 'Fox and Geese', and a similar game, carved onto a piece of limestone, was found in a medieval context at Wharram Percy (Hayfield, pers.comm.). In contrast, at Wharram Percy, several 'noughts and crosses' games have been deeply incised into the plaster, but these may be a relatively late addition, as they overlie the majority of the written graffiti. One piece of text from this farm, written in pencil, suggests that by the 1920s, children were also frequenting these spaces;

GENERAL WATSON

CAPTURED TUNNEL TOP

APRIL 6th 1921.

GENERAL J WATSON

SURRENDERED TUNNEL

TOP AFTER HOURS BOMBARDING

AND WAS AWARDED THE

V.C.

OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE

THEY FADE AWAY.

Richard Henry Harland.

The 'war game' to which this record refers, took place around the open-end of the air-shaft from the Malton-Driffield railway: a large mound at the end of the track to Wharram Percy, known as 'Tunnel Top'. It would have made an excellent vantage point on which to play 'king of the castle' but it is interesting that the game has been phrased within the idiom of a military victory and loss.

As well as their fond illustrations of animals and women, there are occasional drawings of features in the surrounding landscape. At Foxhouse, there is a depiction dating to 1949, of the early stone-faced building attached to the yard, 'as it was'. The drawing of this building (which may have been a folly, viewpoint or dining house, Stamper, pers.comm.) is later nick-named 'The Monkey House', perhaps alluding the goings-on that took place there by this date! There is also a very large but crude drawing of a barn. At Burdale Wold, there is a small cartoon of a bicycle: an essential mode of transport for these young men, which enabled them to socialise at week-ends (cf. Reffold 1984, Beckett 2000). An interest in modes of transport is also suggested by the lovingly detailed typology of air transport, at this same site (see Figure 6.3). An airship (the R33, built at Barlow, North Yorkshire in 1918) and possible zeppelin, a biplane and early jet, were drawn in pencil, in three-dimensional detail. The R33 has a strong local connection, and it is even possible that this draughtsman saw its pilotless launch of a Sopwith Camel, over the North Yorkshire Moors in 1920. Since the earliest jets date from the mid-1940s, however, this typology may also have been based on illustrations seen in books, newspaper pull-outs or tobacco/tea-packet cards.

The latest illustrations in these rooms allude to much younger occupants of these spaces. At Burdale Wold, 'Liverpool FC' is inscribed on one wall, near small cartoons of cowboys. From the 1950s onwards, the farms were usually occupied by a single farmer and his family, and additional labourers were housed elsewhere. It was at this point that the granaries and stables became deserted play-spaces for children, who in turn, read and added to the graffiti of a previous age. They began to make these spaces their own, or made new ones: at Wharram Percy, for example, a small 'kip' underneath the room in which the graffiti was found is lined with prize-winning certificates. According to the present tenant, these are the work of the Midgley brothers, who socialised in this room and left their own mark on its walls (Philip Hoddy, pers.comm.).

Conclusion: Constructing and Disrupting Communities

In the paper, we have argued that the writing of graffiti is a performative act, often created in front of an audience, and designed to draw people into reading, reflecting and adding to it, later on. We have analysed the character, location and content of graffiti in the late nineteenth – late twentieth century agricultural buildings on the Yorkshire Wolds, and considered the motivations behind it. We have suggested that the making of graffiti was one of the means by which a distinctive community – the horselads – created and reaffirmed their identity. As an expression of frustration, desire, wit, skill, anger and pride, these carvings and inscriptions give us an unparalleled insight into the concerns of a group all too often marginalised in historical accounts. We have also identified other groups and individuals who entered the same buildings, and added their own names, marks and thoughts to these walls. Whether these were the beastmen and shepherds who worked alongside the horselads, the army recruits or Land

Army girls of war-time, the tractor drivers of the post-war era, or the children of the single-tenant farmers, their graffiti – and the responses and erasures that followed – embody the many transformations that the community underwent. Graffiti was therefore used by different groups as a vibrant, colourful means of self-expression, through which identities were performed, contested and re-negotiated, in a key period of socio-economic and agricultural change.

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'What the Frak is F**k?' A Thematic Reading of the Graffiti of Bristol

Travis G. Parno

Blazes of neon paint zig and zag across the towering sides of countless urban buildings and those that pass by tend to ignore the displays as mere thuggish attempts to mark territory in the concrete cityscape. Graffiti is, however, an extremely complex phenomenon. If we begin to untangle these anthropogenic marks using an informed, nuanced methodology, we can glean valuable details about idiosyncratic human action and unspoken dialogue. Archaeology occupies a unique position in relation to graffiti studies because it can be utilized from a variety of different angles. An archaeological approach facilitates the combination of temporal and spatial considerations with ethnographic research and material culture studies. With an array of tools at his or her disposal, the archaeologist can enter the painted landscape and attempt to translate the grammar of urban expression.

This chapter explores the abundant potential for graffiti studies from the perspective of archaeological and material culture studies. Using the city of Bristol as a case study, it surveys several brief examples of how archaeologists can consider graffiti through a number of approaches familiar to our discipline. While I will identify graffiti as 'art' throughout this chapter, the word is meant only to serve as a substitute for graffiti and its various connotations are not intended to interfere with my thesis. The implications inherent in 'art' as a label will be discussed below.

Methodology *or* How to Spot Illegal Activity

The textual and photographic information presented below is the outcome of a survey of the city of Bristol's graffiti completed by the author in the fall of 2006. My goal was to survey graffiti at several locations and examine some of the themes associated with graffiti studies in light of my findings. I targeted two contrasting clusters of locations: areas of heavy traffic (e.g. Park Row and St. Michael's Hill – both major roads that are heavily travelled by both cars and pedestrians) and areas of lesser traffic (e.g. Park Place church and alley – an abandoned building located two blocks away from a main street). I theorized, after Orengo and Robinson's (2008) study of St. Rock Street in Barcelona, that higher levels of public access and visibility would yield lower quantities of art with lower degrees of detail while lower levels of public access and visibility would yield higher quantities of art with greater degrees of detail. Rather than focusing on one aspect of graffiti studies, I will present an array of themes as a series of gateways to future research.

Graffiti as a term commonly refers to many different types of expression that are encountered in an urban landscape (although see Giles and Giles; Mallea-Olaetxe; Oliver and Neal, this volume). A *tag* is a short, pseudonymic piece that can be mono- or polychromatic and is generally associated with a relatively short production time. A *stencil* is created when the artist cuts the negative of a design out of cardboard or heavy paper, places the cardboard against the desired 'canvas', and sprays paint over it, leaving the positive image on the canvas. Stencils also usually require a short production time and can be mono- or polychromatic. Additional types of graffiti include *pictures* (e.g. landscapes, cartoons, complex tags, etc), *stickers*, and *chalk art*. The vast majority of my survey included tags and stencils (Figure 7.1) due to a very small sample of pictures and the impermanent nature of chalk graffiti. Despite their preponderance, stickers were excluded from these considerations due to their stark differences from painted or drawn graffiti. Most notably, stickers require minimal production time in the public eye, which drastically alters their size, content, and location.

Graffiti and the Construction of Identity *or* Who's Responsible for This?

> *Spray painting… is another solution to the incessant search for recognition, identity and status in the inner city (Ley 1974: 127).*

Issues of identity often constitute our initial responses when faced with a piece of graffiti, evoking questions of 'what message was the graffitist attempting to convey', 'how is the graffitist portraying him-/herself with this piece', or 'who the hell tagged my garage door'? I argue that graffiti represents undercurrents of individualized urban expression. The pastiche of art from various sites in Bristol illustrates the variety of socio-political and personal idiosyncrasies that bedeck the urban canvas (Figure 7.2). The 'Steal' stencil might highlight anti-establishment sentiments while 'Playing it safe…' could be meant to provoke thought or provide a humorous observation. The 'High Heel Army' piece marks a gendered graffiti, evoking ideals of feminism and empowerment while the 'Peace' tag elicits political, activist, and awareness agendas. Advertisement through street art is also a purposeful plan of dissemination of product information (e.g. 'Emergence Day' stencil).

However, the identity of an object and its meaning is, of course, 'messy' – these brief descriptions that I have

*7.1 'What the Frak is F**k?' stencil, St. Michael's Hill.*

suggested are merely my own way of relating to the images. At the heart of considering an artist and his/her street art is the idea of transformation. It is simple enough for us to view a piece of graffiti, assign it a meaning, and bind that message to the artist. However, we must remember that in addition to the artist's intent, after creating a piece of art, although the artist may remain linked to their work and in turn, become defined by it, the work has a life of its own. To clarify, we might assume that a tagged peace-sign on a vacant wall represents an effort to instigate social change. Perhaps 'High Heel Army' was created by a misogynist attempting to express hatred towards feminists. While these explanations are extremely difficult to access, we need to be mindful that they may be extant in any given piece of graffiti. The post-processual/interpretivist movement in archaeology has highlighted the active nature of material culture, arguing that meaning is subjected to constant renegotiation and reevaluation (Beaudry et al 1991, Shanks and Tilley 1992, Johnson 1996, Gell 1998). It is in this way that we should understand graffiti: while the original intent of the artist certainly existed upon the production of the piece, its meaning may rapidly shift as it becomes caught up within the worldviews of each consecutive onlooker. Carolyn White and Mary C. Beaudry (White and Beaudry 2009: 210) provide a useful explanation of identity:

> *The concept of identity is complicated, paradoxical, and culturally situated in time, place, and society. Identity is at once both imposed by others and self-imposed, and is continuously asserted and reasserted in ways that are fluid and fixed. Identity can lie at the individual level and at the broadest of imaginable scales as it defines a person both as part of a group and as an individual.*

If we accept this definition, understanding the complexity of identity and the numerous issues that are entangled within its construction, then graffiti as material culture is accorded the ability to invoke a reaction from its viewers on its own terms.

A look at the work of Shanks and Tilley will help illuminate this idea. In *Re-constructing Archaeology* (1992), they outline a number of important caveats about how we view past societies and their associated material culture. These points begin with the genesis of an object, arguing that meaning cannot be completely revealed through an examination of the act of production, the original author's intent, or the meaning conveyed to the object's initial audience. Shanks and Tilley then insist that 'the work produced does not just refer to the social conditions of its creation, but in its articulation in the present through the process of interpretation the work points beyond' (Shanks and Tilley 1992: 18). From this perspective, we should consider graffiti, or any other piece of material culture, as an active participant in the negotiation and renegotiation of meaning. Graffiti may inflect covert political messages (Peteet 1996), incite self-evaluation (Banksy 2005), or project racial slurs from a bathroom wall (Blake 1981). Whatever the original objective, once the piece is in place, it gains agency and begins to shape the identity of each observer with whom it interacts. While I have argued for a contextual reading of each piece, it is also important to remember that the microprocesses of renegotiation vary with each participant. No two people will necessarily form

7.2 'Peace' tag, Park Place Church; 'Playing it safe…' stencil, Park Place Church alley; 'Steal' stencil, Park St.; 'High Heel Army' stencil, Park Place Church alley; 'Emergence Day' stencil; University of Bristol Senate House.

the same affective bonds with any fragment of material culture. This is the reason, for example, that disputes over the artistic values of graffiti arise.

Spatial Interpretation of Graffiti *or* Location, Location, Location

> *Whose city is this? Corporate identity shapes the skyline; commercial products line the streets. Faceless thousands surge through nameless spaces (Smith 2000: 86).*

The spatial placement of graffiti carries with it complex implications for the study of urban expression. Similar to the construction of artists' identities, graffiti alters the identity of the street or area with which it is associated. As artist after artist applies his or her personalized work on the sides of homes, alleyways, and train cars, locations are profoundly transformed.

One aspect of graffiti that cannot be escaped is its illegality. Graffiti artists hold extremely risky occupations in which the wrong kind of attention drawn to one's work could mean fines or incarceration. As such, the associated risk level of a given location directly influences the quality and amount of art put up, an idea evidenced in the Bristol survey. Park Row, a two lane thoroughfare that runs through the middle of the city, which is crammed with shops, restaurants, and boutiques, yields simple pieces with very short production times. Myrtle Street, a residential road behind Bristol University, shows a higher concentration of art but the pieces are simple and required a rather brief production time. The Park Place Church alley, which as its name suggest, is a footpath between a set of flats and the Park Place Church, contains a high level of significantly more complex art. Thus, a clear correlation seems to exist between traffic density and quality and detail of art.

However, it appears that the amount of traffic is not the only factor that dictates where artists choose to display their talents. To a certain degree, graffiti canvases seem to be sited on the basis of what might be referred to as 'sacred' or 'profane' space. In his analysis of 18th century vernacular Virginian churches, Dell Upton identified the structures as

a 'critical fusion of holy and profane' (1986: 99). His work defined the spaces within the church as strictly sacred or profane based mainly upon access – which areas were common to all churchgoers and which could only be entered by members of the clergy. In relation to urban expressions, sacred and profane space can refer not only to physical or spiritual access but also to unspoken rules of permission and acceptability among graffitists (see below). I argue that such a rigid dichotomy need not exist, especially when this model is applied to the study of graffiti.

Orengo and Robinson's (2008) examination of the graffiti of St. Rock Street in Barcelona supports this concept of degrees of sacred and profane. St. Rock Street (Carrer d'En Roca) is a seedy back-alleyway commonly associated with the sex trade and drug trafficking and does not often receive heavy pedestrian activity. It is bordered on both ends by busy perpendicular avenues but its unique shape (a crooked line with a niche in the middle) prevents the casual passers-by from viewing its length from opposite ends. In the centre of the footpath, set into the wall about 3m off the ground, rests a statue of St. Rock, watching over the street. The authors note a gradation of graffiti towards the niche as the view from both perpendicular avenues becomes more and more obstructed. They describe how the graffiti becomes significantly more detailed and colourful towards the centre of St. Rock street, forming a nucleus of illegal activity. The curious aspect is St. Rock – despite residing in the vibrant heart of the street's art sector, he remains bereft of any decoration. While there are no real rules involved in adding a layer of paint to a city wall (other than the government's admonishment of 'don't do it!'), in this case, St. Rock has achieved an elevated status on a street that otherwise is coated in artwork. An unspoken rule between the artists of St. Rock Street condemns the defacing of their overseer – an island of sacred space in the midst of the profane (Orengo and Robinson 2008).

The degree to which a space is declared sacred, profane, or somewhere in the middle can be quite elastic. In Bristol, the Park Place Church became too small to properly function as a center of worship and it was decided that it would be replaced to accommodate a larger congregation in the growing area of Clifton. As a result, it soon fell into disuse and disrepair. Several years later, when a billboard was placed in front of the dilapidated structure announcing its future as a site of 'mixed use development', the former church was subsequently doused in graffiti (Figure 7.3). This clear illustration of the transformation of sacred to profane also shows that such distinctions are fluid, given a change in context (following the church's decommission). Canvases across the cityscape appear to respect varying degrees of sanctity or its opposite. These assessments of place, while not always universal, seem to be largely accepted through a sort of tacit agreement between graffiti artists. What is in one context a hands-off location can swiftly become a target for illegal artwork when circumstances change.

C. Fred Blake, among others, has argued that graffiti occupies a liminal space. In his survey of graffiti and ethnic relations in Hawaii, Blake posits that illegal art occurs mainly in unstructured and unregulated spaces. He writes that 'space becomes liminal where it is used for transitory and expressive purposes rather than for instrumental, discreet, and specialized purposes' (Blake 1981: 95). The differentiation implies that in non-liminal areas, individuals act according to normalized roles in adherence with the written and unwritten laws of society. Borrowing from Victor Turner's *The Ritual Process*, Blake establishes the dichotomy of freedom of expression (liminal) and structured action (non-liminal) (Turner 1969). Orengo and Robinson have also identified St. Rock Street as a liminal space, observing that the rarely-traversed path offers a relatively lawless area in which artists can pursue their work. Within these liminal areas, a graffiti artist's choice of a location to display his or her work is reliant not only on factors of visibility and risk but also less tangible ideas of sacred and profane space. It must however be mentioned that, as addressed above, one of the key components of graffiti is the illicit nature of its execution. If it is understood that, within the realm of graffitists, greater risk during production time will yield greater prestige, then normative rules are essentially made to be broken. Rigid dichotomies of structure and anti-structure dissolve as graffitists slip into more exposed areas to express themselves.

Graffiti and Temporality *or* We Simply Don't Have Time to Clean Up This Mess (So We'll Have to Paint Over It)

> *As I lay there listening to the cops on the tracks I realized I had to cut my painting time in half or give up altogether. I was staring straight up at the stenciled plate on the bottom of a fuel tank when I realized I could just copy that style and make each letter three feet high (Banksy 2005: 13).*

As Banksy learned the hard way (see above quotation), the amount of time it takes to splash a piece of art onto a canvas can mean the difference between a successful evening's work and a night spent lying under a train-car covered in engine oil. As was mentioned above, the two major types of graffiti are stencils and tags. A simple rule of thumb is the wider the colour spectrum employed, the longer the time of production required. Smaller cursive style pseudonymic tags can be completed in less than thirty seconds while larger, polychrome pieces consisting of vividly cartoonish bubble letters that plaster a swath of colour across an entire wall can take hours. Similarly, monochromatic stencils of modest size require the time it takes to cover a sheet of cardboard with spray paint. But more involved stencils, such as those of renowned graffiti artist Banksy, necessitate lengthier processes. These associated production times relate directly to issues of visibility and dictate how likely it is for an artist to be seen by the legal authorities. This fact links the temporal facet of graffiti to the spatial: the more time required to create a piece, the more likely it is to be displayed in a secluded space.

This is not the only connection between the time and space of graffiti studies. From an archaeological standpoint, we can view graffiti in the same way we understand the ground

7.3 Graffiti from Park Place Church alley.

that we excavate. Canvases that exist outside of main thoroughfares often become highly stratified, cacophonous pieces of art. They can be read on any number of temporal scales, from the chronology of an individual piece to that of the entire surface. Periods of measurable deposition take place that enable us to create a relative timeline of painting events. By peeling back the layers of colour, we can endeavour to understand the order in which individual pieces were laid on surfaces and attempt to mark trends in stylization, method, and subject matter. In this way, we can begin to examine the process that leads from a single piece to a complex collage in terms of which spaces are chosen for massive coverage, how pieces are deemed worthy to remain visible, and which pieces are selected by individual artists to be covered.

More often than not, the selection process of which pieces will be covered can be boiled down to a war of recognition. Stratified sheets of colourful monikers accumulate on city walls as a continual fight for dominance (i.e. getting one's name in as many visible spots across the city as possible) plays out on both the large and small scale. This struggle is typically illustrated by sections of canvas coated in a tangled mess of cursive-esque scripts that accumulate to the point of illegibility (Figure 7.4). In other cases, monochromatic signature tags are relegated to the background as larger more complex pieces are placed over them. Dissecting the stratigraphic integrity of the canvases that dot the cityscape represents the future in graffiti studies. Some studies have begun to tackle these issues. The Graffiti Archaeology Project has used time-lapse photography to capture

7.4 Heavily tagged door, Park Place Church alley.

7.5 A response to graffiti, Myrtle Road.

canvases in various stages of accretion and dissolution in several cities across the United States (Curtis 2007). Their data is displayed in a dynamic internet presentation that is extremely accessible and can be updated in real time. The website does not attempt to theorize or problematize the processes of accumulation, seemingly preferring to leave the interpretations to the observers. The Graffiti Archaeology Project is certainly an intriguing exercise, but more work can be done to understand the tendencies (or lack thereof) involved in the temporal interactions of pieces of graffiti and how they relate to artists' decisions to cover or maintain existing artwork.

Public Responses to Graffiti *or* You Call This Garbage Art?!

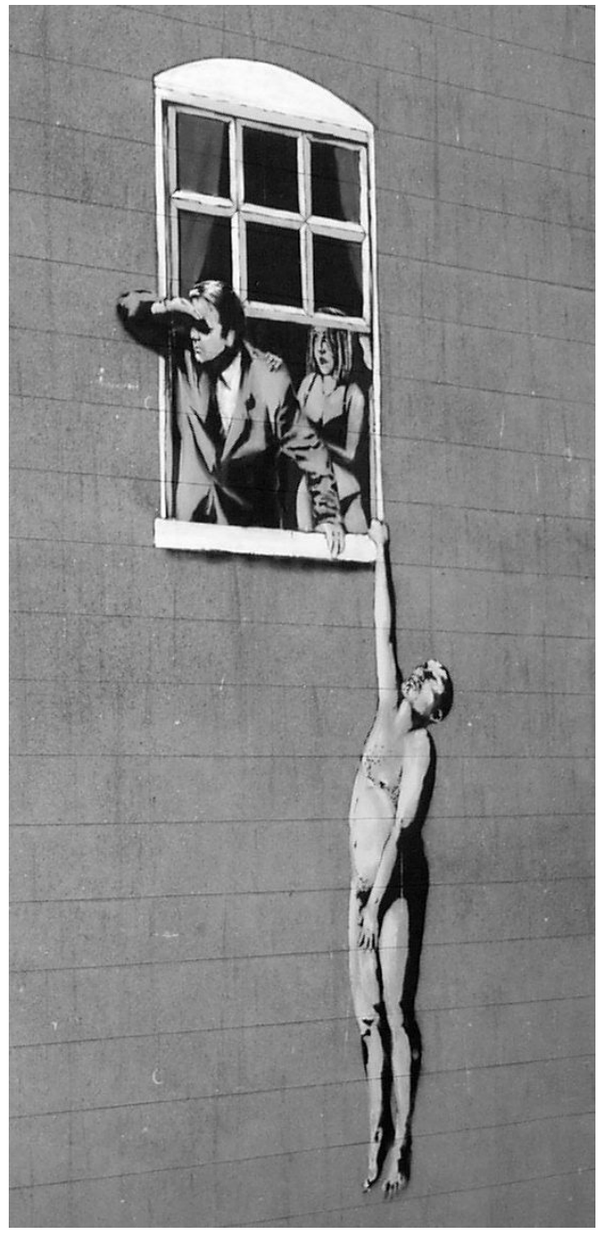
> *Perhaps we should invest our radical aspirations in art, look to aesthetics to nurture the spirit, create the will to change the world? That's what the street artists have done (Smith 2000 : 88)*

Graffiti is not the most subtle of artistic mediums. Plastered to almost any urban surface, it is often large, brightly coloured, and demanding to be noticed. For this reason, public engagement is almost certain. Responses vary from person to person and location to location. Some homeowners whose properties fall victim to a tag or stencil choose to ignore the piece or maintain it as a work of art. Others prefer to cover the offending graffiti with a layer of paint (Figure 7.5). Many complexities exist in the variable perceptions of graffiti. A curious association is that of graffiti with dirt and a lack of cleanliness (Douglas 1966). This may be derived from a culturally deep-seated view of urban space as unclean, a view bolstered by our inability to regulate graffiti. Graffiti also gained a connection to serious crime and illegal activity following the advent of the influential 'Broken Window Theory' in 1982. In March of that year, Wilson and Kelling published an article entitled 'Broken Windows: The Police and Neighbourhood Safety' in which they associated material dilapidation with social decline and increases in criminal activity (see Wilson and Kelling 1982). The idea was that passersby, witnessing a broken window, would assume that the owners were negligent and that this would snowball into vandalism, drug trade, and violent crime. The Broken Window Theory formed the foundation of New York City's battle against crime and vandalism in the early 1990s. With this in mind, individuals who choose to eliminate the effects of graffiti by

layering it with more paint are in a sense working to 'clean' their property, wiping away the traces of degradation and apathy in an attempt to erase any evidence that their land is a locus of illegal activity.

However, these associations may be decaying in the minds of contemporary city-dwellers. A central debate in the current consideration of graffiti is whether or not it can be considered 'art'. Definitions are given (*Random House Unabridged Dictionary*: 'art – 1. the quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance') and counter-arguments are shouted ('It's just a bunch of goons making a mess of our city!' – see *Graffiti Hurts* 2007). For the purposes of this section, I turn to the example of one of the most prolific and internationally recognized graffiti artists: Banksy. Banksy (whose very identity is unstable, claimed by the *Mail Online* (2008) to be Robin Gunningham while others hold that he is really Robert Banks) began his graffiti career in the late 1980's. His playful, thought-provoking pieces, in combination with his enigmatic personality and international portfolio, have raised his profile across the globe. Banksy now exists as one of the most famous (or infamous) members of the global graffiti community (for more see Banksy 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, Metro 2006). Because his art has infiltrated the streets and museums of London, Barcelona, California, New York City, and other places, people sometimes forget that the genesis of Banksy's work was in Bristol. His graffiti can still be seen in the nooks and crannies of the city, although some pieces are slightly less subtle.

In June of 2006, a controversial Banksy-authored piece appeared on the side of the Brook Young People's Sexual Health Clinic in Bristol (Figure 7.6). A whirlwind of media coverage sparked an immediate argument over whether or not the Bristol City Council should allow the piece to remain. The decision was made all the more interesting given that the a fountain in front of the Bristol City Council House had been the target of a previous Banksy work in 2001 and the piece had subsequently been whitewashed by the city officials. The council released a statement saying that 'we have to decide if it is public art or graffiti. If enough locals like it then it will stay' (*Metro* 2006). The *Metro*, a British national urban free sheet, covered the story and appealed for readers' responses on their website. The outpouring of support was overwhelming. Dr. Annie Evans, a doctor employed by the targeted clinic, was quoted as exclaiming that the faculty were 'bouncing for joy' over their building's latest addition. A *Metro* reader identified as 'Rgdg' from Bristol posted the following encouraging remark: 'This should definitely stay. Fair enough, there is a lot of rubbish around, but Banksy's work (and many other great graffiti artists), is nothing but art'. However, the article did not only elicit positive responses. Andy Holmes, a reader hailing from Patchway, Bristol, wrote 'I think it's horrible, I think Banksy should be found and arrested, he has defaced enough of Bristol already. Graffiti is illegal'. Other readers warned against a blanket acceptance of similar pieces because it would open the door to a casual acceptance that all graffiti is 'ok to do'. Specific points of



7.6 Controversial Banksy piece, Brook Young People's Sexual Health Clinic.

contention revolved around the definition(s) of 'art' and the supposed difference(s) between 'street art' and 'graffiti'. After the dust had settled, the council opted to leave the artwork on the wall of clinic, a trend that is quickly becoming commonplace.

This was not the first time, nor will it likely be the last time, that a Banksy stencil has made headlines. In March of 2007, homeowners rushed to defend a Banksy mural when one of Bristol's graffiti removal vans pulled up next to the piece. The city alleged that the group was merely present to remove a rusty street-sign. Needless to say, the art in question remained safe. Less than a week later, several 'bungling council workers' painted over one of Banksy's earliest works in Easton, Bristol and much outrage

resulted (*Metro* 2007). His pieces have even broken into the supercilious realm of fine arts collectors – celebrities have made news by purchasing Banksy art and a recent auction sold a self-portrait of the artist with a chimpanzee's head for £198,000. A work entitled 'Space Girl and Bird,' estimated to sell for £10,000-15,000, shattered expectations by closing at £288,000 (*BBC News* 2007).

Naturally, we would be foolish to consider Banksy and his associated phenomenon as the norm for graffiti artists. But his rise in popularity certainly reflects a change in attitude towards street art from previous generations of governments such as that of New York City in the 1980s and early 1990s. While not fully accepted across the board, the public, and subsequently city governments, seem to have at least widened the discourse to include the merits as well as the detrimental effects of graffiti (providing a good example of how the meaning of graffiti can shift). The burgeoning field of contemporary archaeology can and should have a hand in documenting these shifting trends in public perspective. An extensive diachronic ethnographic survey of involved parties, from both the crackdown era and that of modern acceptance, would be extremely valuable in understanding how and why opinions have been affected. Studies of this sort would aid in an interdisciplinary understanding of current disputes in the world of fine arts as well as investigations into greater change in societal outlooks on legality, style, and urban life.

Concluding Thoughts or The Meaning's in the Mess

> *Archaeology is also immediately emotive, sentimental. Not so much a method or set of procedures, archaeology is its experiences – the past in the present and what is done with it (Shanks 1992: 83).*

This brief survey has provided a glimpse of the informational value of graffiti when considered from an archaeological perspective. These emblazoned fragments of paint not only reflect projected identities but also retain the ability to affect observers in unique and powerful ways. Graffiti plays a role in designations of place and landscape alteration through its visual force. In addition to teasing out the significance of these occurrences, archaeologists can excavate horizontally through the layers of art to determine the timeline of deposition in each area of accumulation. This survey has also shown that public responses to graffiti reveal a great deal of information about the affective qualities of street art. But this chapter is only meant as a starting point.

As the fields of historical and contemporary archaeology transform theory and methodology, so must we also progress in our subject matter. For too long graffiti has taken a backseat to more traditional investigations. A move has been made towards more emotive and experiential archaeologies and this shift can certainly include this fundamental element of cityscapes within its considerations. C. Fred Blake argued for this inclusion as early as 1981, claiming that 'graffiti are essentially behavioural residues; that is they are archaeological in nature insofar as they are anonymous artefacts fixed in space and time' (Blake 1981: 99). I have outlined possible focuses on identity, spatiality, temporality, and ethnography; however, these are merely four promising areas of study – countless options exist. For example, a survey that incorporates the budding wealth of archaeological technology, such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS), could assist in identifying graffiti hotspots, ascertaining subject consistencies across a spatial variable, or monitoring the growth of new graffiti. GIS is also a peerless tool for displaying map-based data. Photos of individual pieces or entire canvases could be linked to a system, thereby providing detailed, navigable information at the click of a button (see Gillings and Goodrick 1996).

Attempting to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of modern graffiti can also offer insight into artists of the past. As other chapters in this volume note (e.g. Giles and Giles; Mallea-Olaetxe; Oliver and Neal, Owen, this volume), graffiti is not a modern creation. While I do not, of course, mean to suggest some sort of continuum of a graffiti framework across history, there is much to be gained in viewing past artwork through the lens of a contemporary understanding. I believe that a central function of contemporary archaeology is simply to affect current thought processes regarding the material culture we study. Rather than thrusting the artefacts we study (whether it be shards of ceramic or patterns of paint), into rigid typologies, we must remain cognizant of deeper connections that existed (or exist) between artefact and actant. Graffiti studies can occupy a significant place within contemporary archaeology as an archaeology of experience. It shapes the identities of its creators and its observers. It is in-your-face, demanding to be noticed and reacted against. Graffiti is almost impossible to ignore. Perhaps now, rather than looking beyond the array of colours sprayed onto urban canvases, we can see graffiti as an important tool in our archaeological and material culture studies.

Acknowledgments

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'Theo Loves Doris': Wild-Signs in Landscape and Heritage Context

John Schofield

Graffiti, Ancient and Modern

Once, in one memorable day as a prehistoric archaeologist, I visited the painted cave at Font de Gaume and saw the engravings at Les Combarelles. Some years later I was shown rock carvings in the Cedarburg Mountains of South Africa. All are hugely impressive, and provide clear evidence for the former use of these caves and rock shelters, of the people that created this art and the conditions in which they lived and worked. Later, as a contemporary archaeologist, I found myself scrutinising modern graffiti close to the Thames Barrier in London. Indeed whenever I see panels of graffiti I stop and look, as I would paintings in a gallery. I attempt to read these wild-signs and understand them in exactly the same way as I did prehistoric art some years ago, in the places where they were intended to be seen. Modern graffiti tells us about the contemporary use of underpasses and railway sidings, about the people that created the art, and the conditions in which they live their lives. People will construct and reshape the places that matter to them – by redecorating a new home, redesigning the garden. For some young people the street is their place, so they transform it, just as prehistoric communities transformed caves through artistic intervention. So what is the difference exactly, apart from a few thousand years? Why should ancient art be the subject of legitimate archaeological enquiry, while the archaeology of contemporary graffiti is considered by some to be a ridiculous distraction from the main purpose and role of archaeology? I hope this chapter, along with others in this volume, can begin to provide part of the answer.

Background

Most of the work I do for English Heritage now involves the contemporary past – the archaeology of the world we ourselves have created and shaped in our everyday lives and social practices. I don't get out much, but when I do my visits often take me into recently abandoned buildings, and interstitial places and landscapes – urban fallow: places that have either changed irrevocably since they fell out of use, or places that now hold very different meanings to those that they held originally. Some have changed, for example from industrial to gallery spaces; from military to light industrial use. Others have become infamous scenes of crime. Some are inhabited or visited by drug users, alcoholics, sex workers, and the homeless. Some are used as film sets or as the location for art installations. But all of these places I visit have been deemed to have some significance, a value, and my visit is often concerned with making a more detailed assessment, or determining future management needs.

I find these hidden spaces fascinating. Many are almost prehistoric in their character, because it is hard to track down informants and to find documents, while the physical evidence for their former use can be at best ephemeral and is often intangible – the smell of the place; its aura; the sounds it creates. My interest in these contemporary places has been inspired by a number of things. First is the fascination archaeologists have with closure, both in the physical sense of what lies hidden within, beneath or behind, and in the emotional and psychoanalytical sense of denial – things people would rather not talk about. Second, is the often quite intimate personal connections that exist between people and place (Schofield 1997). The thing that grips me about working with the contemporary past is the nature and strength of these connections, and the passion with which people talk about familiar places, places that for others are often remote, mundane and unspectacular (cf. Read 1996 for a discussion specifically of lost places). This corresponds to something Michael Bell (1997) wrote about in the journal *Theory and Society* a few years ago: he described the 'ghosts of place', recognising that ghosts – that is, the sense of the presence of those who are not physically there – are a ubiquitous aspect of the phenomenology of place. Finally – and like most archaeologists I suspect – I like creating or reading alternative histories; and for me that especially means the things that tend not to be spoken of: taboos such as drug use, sex and prostitution, crime and intrigue. The main point of this contribution is that wild-signs make a significant contribution to these alternative histories, and to the personalisation of place. Wild-signs help us to understand place, and to value it, in exactly the same way as prehistoric paintings and carvings do for the caves in which this artwork is situated. Perhaps there's an argument that caves were the interstitial places of the Upper Palaeolithic – places for the adventurous and the ambiguous to make their mark?

I want now to describe some of the places I have been to, to explain how I think wild-signs - specifically here in the form of uncommissioned and unsolicited art and graffiti - contribute to understanding and interpretation, how they can enhance people's experience of place, and the way we as a society value them . I'll emphasise the point that we are now moving away from the position where officially there is just one view of the past, with any alternative histories

ignored by state and local authority officials (Schadla-Hall 2004; Thomas 2004). Wild-signs are a key part of this alternative view of 'heritage'. I will present three examples, and then make a few general comments to close.

Strait Street, Valletta (Malta)

Strait Street, also known as 'The Gut', was for many the beating heart of Valletta, from at least the early twentieth century until soon after 1964 when Malta declared independence, and the navies whose staff supported and relied upon the bars, music halls and brothels of Strait Street began to withdraw from the island. Malta then and now identifies strongly with the Catholic faith, so for most Maltese the street was considered a shameful place. The BBC visited in 1964, describing The Gut as a 'sleazy, reaking ditch'. The magazine Titbits (of all things) also ran a story around that time. It said:

> *British tourists should steer clear of Malta till the island's government take this advice: Stamp out the vice in a street that is the shame of Malta – Straight Street [sic] …an area of vice and prostitution that ranks with the world's most notorious sin spots.*

The author goes on:

> *[The Gut] is a dirty, squalid alley that is packed from noon to early morning with prostitutes who sell themselves for the price of a drink. …*
>
> *A street where teenage British sailors are accosted by women old enough to be their grandmothers. …*

Such was the stigma attached to the place that the street has now remained empty for nearly forty years. The bars were locked up when the owners left and nothing has happened to the street since that time. Yet unlike the owners, who headed for Soho amongst other places, many of those that worked in the bars and brothels – musicians, sex workers, barmen and women, chefs, dancers – continued to live in the flats above the bars, and some still do so today. These are the invisible people of Valletta; street people in a sense, though their excursions into the street are now rare. It was a fascination with these people, with the locked doors and what lay behind them, with the fact that some former bar owners who now own jewellery shops in Valletta wanted our story of Strait Street to be 'respectful', that we were warned off, and that sailors regularly return to Strait Street to show their wives, families and, girlfriends where they spent their time – it was all of this that drew us to Strait Street.

I am not going to describe the results of this survey here (cf. Schofield and Morrissey 2006, 2007), but rather mention a few of the wild-signs, and attitudes towards them. The first point is a historical one: that Valletta is a planned city, built on a grid by the Knights of St John in the sixteenth century. It is also a Catholic city, with religion very much on public show. Socially, religiously, and economically, the street intersections are the focus of all activity. This is where people congregate; it is how people navigate their way around; and it is where all the signs are: road signs, street names, advertisements etc. Also on every major intersection are religious statues and icons. These corners are therefore key to understanding the city. In building our map of Strait Street, we have relied on these intersections, because it is these that provide an orientation to anyone trying to explain a location to us, and because of the signs and graffiti that exist here. The signs are advertisements for products (beer, spirits, cigarettes), or for bars and music halls, and because of the congregation of people, the graffiti are concentrated here too. These signs help to interpret the street, and to orientate people within it. Tourists, often returning sailors, do increasingly want to find these places and the few surviving bar signs are the most obvious markers that remain.

But attitudes are changing. A company of advocates that recently moved into one of the former bars commissioned architects to complete a sensitive conversion. On the architects' advice, they deliberately retained and conserved the wild-signs on the wall outside.

Another example of active yet ad hoc conservation is at Rocks Bar, owned and used now virtually as an urban beach-hut by its owners Tony and Anna Pace. Far from the shame that some feel about Strait Street, here there is pride in the business that they created and ran for years: a tiny bar, but with a large and loyal following, mostly amongst American sailors. An example of this is the extent to which they have retained the bar as it was, but also the fact that although the loo has gone, the graffiti on the loo wall was deliberately retained, because the names reminded them of their customers and friends, and because they considered it part of the history of the building (Figure 8.1).

Out in the street we have also recorded the graffiti and signage we have seen. 'Theo loves Doris' for example (Figure 8.2), a picture of Fred Flintstone and the name 'Paul Baker'; a picture stuck to the wall, and a tiny portrait in felt pen. Who were the people that made these marks? What emotions inspired them to create these wild-signs; what can we read into them? Should they stay, or is a photographic record of their existence sufficient? I'll return to these questions later, but first another very different example.

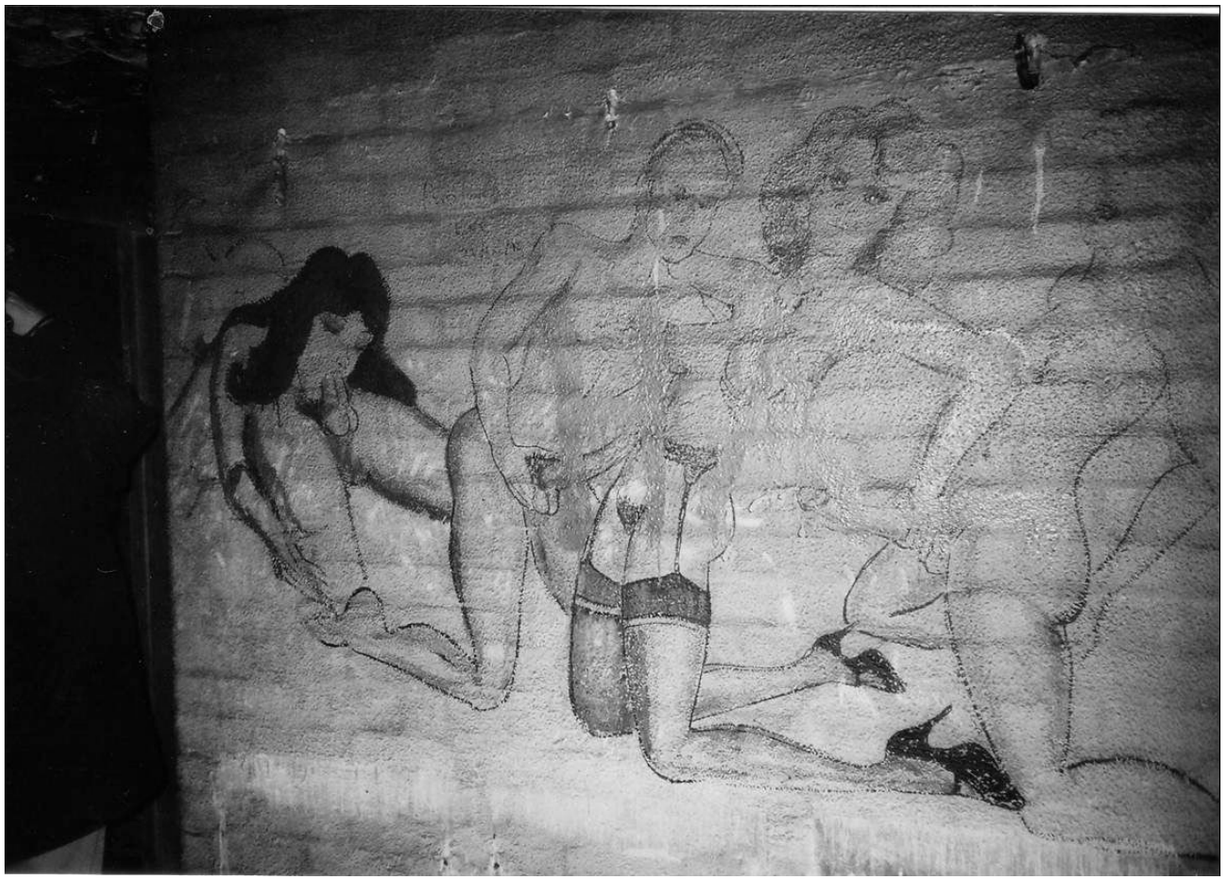
Bempton Radar Station, Yorkshire

Another dilemma, and another case where alternative history exists in strong and direct contrast to the official view, can be seen at Bempton, a Second World War radar station, later used in the early Cold War years, and abandoned since the late 1960s. The degree of erosion demonstrates the fact that the images I am about to discuss have been here for some time, most likely from the late 1960s.

The following quotation is a description by an artist Mike Dearing who visited Bempton in 2002 and 1996. He said this of his first visit:

8.1 Graffiti on the loo wall of Rock's Bar, Strait Street.

8.2 'Theo Loves Doris', Strait, Street.



8.3 Sexual imagery from Bempton radar station, Yorkshire.

The first time I descended the concrete steps into the lightless tunnels of Bempton was six years ago. I knew what to expect but didn't expect what I found. My head was swarming with the stories I had heard; stories that had spread quickly and developed into a type of modern mythology: of drawings of the Devil making love to women, of darkness and dead animals, of sinister people and the echoes of Satanism. A large red pentagram crudely painted was on the wall over the steps, with two nails on either side. The steps opened out into a small room, filled with junk and leading from which was a long tunnel that stretched away into the darkness; so long that not even the light from our torch beams could pick out the end. The tunnel was straight and utterly silent. The only noises were our footsteps and our breathing. A type of group expectancy had settled on us and our senses were on fire. The tunnel turned a couple of corners and opened in a set of large iron blast doors. We pulled these open and entered a second corridor. To the right several doors led into rooms. My friend pulled me by the arm into one of the rooms and our torches illuminated the walls. They were covered with paintings. They were on every wall. All the space had been utilised. No wall had been left untouched and some paintings were over six feet in height. All were pornographic. When we staggered from the tunnels it was with the unshakeable belief that what we had seen was not ordinary graffiti, but something richer and more meaningful. This was not vandalism. This was art (Dearing 2002: 3).

Dearing also describes how the tunnels seemed to have a presence about them that the paintings inspired. At the foot of the steps were the words 'Welcome to Paradise'. His words capture the sense of something remote and otherworldly, and of discovery, reminiscent of the discovery of cave paintings in underground caverns.

In viewing this small selection of images (and I have included here only two of the more modest representations), remember in particular the scale: the size of the images and the intensity – pornographic and satanic - that the assemblage as a whole would generate. These images are of a strong sexual nature and could cause some offence (Figures 8.3-8.4). But this is what is there, and the interpretation of what exists in this underground bunker is fascinating.

My interest here is twofold, first, the alternative history that the images present. Whatever the details of their interpretation, they contradict the order, the formality, the function of the original building. Indeed a stronger contradiction it is hard to imagine. The bunker is a scheduled monument, and the images are held on the

8.4 More sexual imagery from Bempton radar station, Yorkshire.

scheduling file. Yet the description of the monument (the legal 'schedule entry') makes no mention of the artwork, or its interpretation. One could argue therefore that the artwork is not a part of the scheduled monument at all. It could arguably be painted over or defaced without punishment or prosecution. So, it is a curious indecision: the artwork is accepted and included to a degree, but not officially recognised in the one place that matters.

The second point though is more interesting for us I think, and that concerns interpretation. At its most obvious, interpretation provides insight into the continued use of the military site after its closure. Mike Dearing believes these paintings aren't simply erotic art, but are occult in character. Interesting also that despite the horns and devilry, these are human figures, and possibly based on real people. All of the paintings promote a sense of sexual tension, but some also inspire other emotions, darker and malign.

But dig deeper and the more interesting this gets. As Dearing points out, a parallel exists in the life and works of Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), and in particular the episode 1920–1923 when he and his wife tried to found the religion of Crowleyanity at the Abbey of Thelema in northern Sicily. Crowley's idea was to create a place where he could explore the realms of magick and assist his followers in the discovery of their 'True Will'. The abbey was consecrated through a ritual of sex magick, and all of the walls covered with paintings, mostly pornographic. Crowley said, 'my house is going to be the Whore's hell; a secret place of the quenchless fire of lust and the eternal torment of love'. His disciples were forced to look at these paintings constantly.

Many of the images remain in the ruins of this abbey. Tim Neal visited the site in 2006 and said this of his visit:

> *Of Alastair Crowley I was told his books were bound in human skin. Later I heard that he had been born in Leamington Spa, which brought him down to earth a bit. In Sicily in the mid 1990s I learned he had lived there in the 1920s. When I visited a museum in Cefalu to ask about him one of the curators told me that Crowley had been driven out of town by Mussolini, following which a number of his sympathisers had been into his house and taken away decorated items including furniture. From them, I was told, Crowley was principally a painter. The house was still there up behind the town. I walked on the hillside that looked out over the peninsula - the headland below which Cefalu was built, the headland Crowley had seen in a vision and which had brought him here in the first place. That and the fact that nowhere else would have him.*
>
> *I found a mass of dense undergrowth hidden below a new football stadium and apartment blocks. Clambering over the wall I followed a narrow path through an overgrown garden and emerged in front of a small cottage unoccupied since the 1920s, decrepit and vandalised. The museum curator had told me that an aristocratic lady from Palermo, who had loaned the property to Crowley, was so disgusted by his treatment of it that she refused ever to rent the place to anyone, nor would she allow the town council to use it as a museum in Crowley's memory.*
>
> *I climbed in through a window. The roof was practically collapsed but some parts of the walls were still clearly visible, with traces of Crowley's paintings. Red cocaine and a devilish figure straddling an arched doorway stuck in my memory. Such a small modest building for the temple of the man who announced the coming of the Age of Aquarius.*
>
> *Plenty of people had been there before me and one of the rooms had been lived in for some time judging by the bedding. It reminded me of the isolated and abandoned houses I'd discovered as a boy. Graffiti was everywhere, pentagrams and phallus, poems and web addresses. What I thought of as I walked around were drugs, of narcotics and plenty of them. Cocaine was written along the wall and above a man's head painted near the floor was written demonic smile to my brain Soak me in Cognac.*
>
> *I regretted the broken walls and missing furniture. The whole place was decorated once and just these fragments were left now. It would all be gone in a few years and when I returned in 2005 Crowley's work was less visible. While part of me wanted it preserved, it was at the same time a relief to find someplace that doesn't withstand time; a place a curator can't number nor an archaeologist rescue. Now it is just paintings, and that has so little to do with what this place once was. Saving it would save so little. Crowley's temple was for those who wanted it and for them alone. Bugger the rest. And he did (Neal pers. comm.).*

These paintings and those at Bempton are different, but there are similarities of purpose, both influencing feelings of sexual and satanic reverence. There is similarity too with Aubrey Beardsley's cartoons, produced some years before Crowley's images, and intended to present deliberate farce and fantasy. Clear similarities can be seen between some of the Bempton images and Beardsley's picture The Powder Puff (1893) for example (Dearing 2002: 6).

This artwork – this gallery - forms a fascinating part of the story of Bempton, and all the more fascinating for the taboos that it challenges. And as with any archaeological enquiry, there are unanswered questions: Why here? Were these the work of a latter day Crowley? Was the artist aware of Crowley and his religion? Either way, they are just about as alternative and 'wild' as one can get.

Nevada Peace Camp

My final example concerns another project I am involved

8.5 Imagery from the Tunnel of Love, Nevada Peace Camp.

with, exploring the Cold War landscape of the Nevada Desert (Schofield et al. 2006). Covering a region the size of a large English county is the Nevada Test Site, and within it over fifty separate areas used for different types of military experimentation. Yucca Flat for example was used for detonating underground atomic tests. Archaeologists have been studying this landscape for over ten years now, creating a record of the material culture that has been abandoned in the desert (Beck 2002). Opposite the only gate into the Test Site, just over the interstate highway, is Peace Camp, where protestors camped-out periodically over a period of thirty years. Some still return there. When we first considered working at Peace Camp we were told either that 'nothing exists there', or (more worryingly) that 'it's not archaeological'. The fact that it wasn't archaeological, in the opinion of budget holders, meant no funding. But there is material there in abundance, and it is archaeological.

Those that occupied Peace Camp were completely in tune with the landscape around them. When they left they cleaned up, so thoroughly that hardly any artefacts remain. But what protestors did create and leave behind was a wonderfully rich and diverse artistic record in the form of interventions that resemble the land art of Richard Long and others: stone circles, cairns, and stone arrangements representing the symbols of the various religious communities present here (Schofield et al. 2006).

By creating a map of this area, and by speaking to former occupants, we are beginning to build an interpretation of this landscape. Some of the pieces have particular meaning and resonance, such as the shadow children; others are more mundane. There appear to be ritual areas, where certain pieces are concentrated, and domestic zones containing hearths and sleeping areas. Again this is an alternative history, and the contrast with the massive, permanent and monumental architecture in the Test Site is striking. In terms of presenting and interpreting a Cold War landscape here, you need both. One without the other is meaningless. But still officially our work is not recognised - we are considered troublesome by many. By contrast, traditional owners the Western Shoshone are enthusiastic about the project, and have allowed us access, yet have less interest in work at the Test Site.

Drainage tunnels that run under the highway and link Peace Camp to the Test Site are a significant place in this landscape. A bit like the intersections in Strait Street this place – known as the Tunnel of Love - was a focus of attention, a place for congregation. This was the only shade available at Peace Camp. It was used as a skittle alley. Children were conceived here. And the walls are covered with graffiti from the 1960s to the present (Figure 8.5). One piece refers to an experiment that at the time the graffiti were produced was supposed to be a closely guarded

secret, so it does contribute to understanding, and clearly demonstrates the need for symmetry if we are to make sense of the whole.

The *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (2002) wrote a piece on our work, and showed the graffiti. When we returned the following year all the graffiti at the tunnel entrances had been whitewashed over. Someone didn't like the attention this place was attracting. And there's a second postscript. Returning in 2006, a further three years later, some of the graffiti promoting peace and love in rainbow colours had now been covered in dark gothic script citing unambiguous messages of hate and war. Even the stone arrangement announcing the presence of 'Peace Camp' had been reconfigured to read 'The Dark Side'. The archaeology of this tunnel is one of the most contested places I know. Perhaps it was wrong to publicise the presence of this artwork, inciting vandalism and messages of violence and hatred in this remote desert landscape. Or perhaps it has benefits: encouraging a visual dialogue that re-emphasises and reasserts the real social significance of wildsigns.

Art and Criminality

Wikipedia defines Graffiti as: a type of deliberately inscribed marking made by humans on surfaces, both private and public. It can take the form of art, drawings, or words. When done without a property owner's consent it constitutes illegal vandalism. Graffiti has existed at least since the days of ancient civilizations such as classical Greece and the Roman Empire' (en.wikipedia.org/ – accessed 30 October 2006). In the UK making graffiti is now illegal, contravening the 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act. A Home Office press release of 31 March 2004 stated that:

> *New anti-graffiti measures … come into force today:*
>
> - *Powers for local authorities to issue penalty notices for graffiti and fly-posting;*
> - *Powers for local authorities to remove graffiti from 'street furniture', such as phone boxes (these powers will be piloted in twelve areas from today);*
> - *A ban on sales of aerosol paints to under-16s.*
>
> *The measures will equip local councils, police, housing officers, environmental health officers and others with the tools they need to deal with this type of anti-social behaviour, which impacts on communities across the country.*

Home Office Minister Hazel Blears said:

> *Graffiti is criminal damage and an eye-sore which blights communities. It affects people's quality of life, increases fear of crime and reduces pride in a community. It also costs us all millions of pounds a year to clean-up - money which could be better spent on other valuable services.*
>
> *One in three people say graffiti and vandalism are problems in their area. Removing graffiti will have a huge impact on improving our communities and is a key part of the Government's TOGETHER campaign to tackle anti-social behaviour.*
>
> *Measures such as penalty notices and piloting new powers for councils to tackle graffiti more easily send out a strong message that this kind of anti-social behaviour will be tackled not tolerated.*

Of course graffiti can be anti-social and can affect people's quality of life, but there are other issues here that legislation has not addressed or perhaps even considered. One is the history or tradition of making graffiti, and a recognition that examples of graffiti – ancient and modern - can enhance understanding and enjoyment of our environment. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than graffiti on the military estate where it has been used to interpret the multiple and complex uses of space (public/private for example; functional/domestic, official/unofficial etc) and cultural diversity (Cocroft et al. 2006) at sites that have no official documentation presently available and where servicemen have moved away. Graffiti also provide an alternative archaeology, or alternative geography (Cresswell 1996), creating a documentation of interstitial places, the social meaning of which is confined to certain (often excluded) groups in society. The examples presented here were all presumably (in the terms of the Wikipedia encyclopedia entry) illegal, depending on the law in Malta and Nevada. Also, Strait Street, Bempton and Nevada are all about transgression, and about minority groups creating opposition to the order of the day. Without graffiti how else will these groups have voice and vision in the archaeological record?

So, as I recently said, why are all graffiti - and all graffiti artists - criminalised? We are right to want cleaner cities, but there does need to be a wider debate I feel before society tars all graffiti tags, and all graffiti artists, with the same brush (Schofield 2005: 39).

Conclusion

In a way the conclusions here are obvious. Wild-signs in the form of art and graffiti are critical components of sites, buildings and landscape. Some will document a site's main function; its official and accepted role. Others contradict that and contribute to its alternative history. Some will be deliberately retained and conserved, perhaps through statutory protection; others – and it is usually those that contribute an alternative history – will not. Yet even these can survive. The decision taken by the owners to retain their graffiti in the loo of Rocks Bar was inspired, and because it is 'art' in a very remote place, the interventions on the ground surface at Peace Camp are unlikely to be removed. But for every gain there is a loss. Someone has removed the pentagram at Bempton; someone has whitewashed and

later defaced the graffiti in the Tunnel of Love; bar signs in Strait Street are being removed. And it is inevitable that it will be so. What we can do in the heritage sector is draw attention to these issues, and to what these wild-signs contribute, to understanding, to presenting alternative views, and to finding the ghosts of place. They do exist, if only we know how to read the wild-signs that point us in the right direction. We can also recommend recording, as part of the continued use of sites and buildings, and even protection where graffiti are integral with the history and use of nationally important sites. Wild-signs matter, and that is the point we need to make most clearly of all.

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Painting The River's Margins

Tiago Matos Silva[1]

In my grandparent's neighbourhood in Lisbon during the early 80's there was a crude graffito, in brush-painted red letters, boldly declaring 'Barreirinhas Cunhal tem um cancro. Cancro cumpre o teu dever!' or 'Barreirinhas Cunhal has cancer. Cancer, do your job!'. Álvaro Barreirinhas Cunhal was and had been for 30 years prior (underground at first, and overtly after 1974), the all-mighty secretary-general of the Portuguese Communist Party. At the same time, during those post-revolutionary years in Portugal[2], he was one of the most loved and most hated politicians in the country. Even then, the power and simplicity of graffiti as a vehicle of communication and the harsh humour of its message impressed me deeply as I learned to spot the political inclinations of people by their reaction to those red, badly draw letters.

Graffiti and Resistance to Fascism

The use of clandestine mural painting as a political weapon in Portugal dates back at least to the years of the colonial war (1961-74), when the dictatorship of Oliveira Salazar (and later, Marcello Caetano) started to be repeatedly challenged by anti-fascist and anti-colonialist graffiti hastily painted on street walls under the cover of darkness. This was, at the time, a very serious and truly radical endeavour, as it guaranteed the politically outspoken a trip to the headquarters of the regime's[3] brutal political police and eventually (if the writer was of conscription age) direct enlistment to the front line of one of Portugal's African colonial conflicts. Even so, with the deepening of the war and the radicalization of its opposition (which congregated not only around the Communist Party, until then the only real organized opposition to Salazar, but also a myriad of small but very active Marxist collectives that defended any kind of action that would instigate revolution), the examples of radical messages left on the country's walls multiplied, to the great dismay and exasperation of state officials, who tried at all costs to maintain the image of an united country enthusiastically supporting Salazar's regime.

From this period, when university students became more than willing participants in the struggle against the regime and its increasing paranoia, are many stories of political resistance mediated through the symbolic violence of graffiti. Certainly one of the most evocative is that revealed recently by Fernando Rosas, one of the founders of the Portuguese Worker's Communist Party[4], in which he and an accomplice made an overnight car journey from Oporto to Lisbon stopping at every opportunity to daub the slogan 'Nem mais um soldado para as colónias!' (not another soldier to the colonies) on roadside walls. Decades later, while doing research in the PIDE-DGS archives, he found that the action had been described by the political police as a highly organized demonstration of the magnitude of clandestine opposition, judging by their ability to paint the same slogan – in one night all over the country – proving the complicity of dozens, if not hundreds, of covert oppositionists.

Of course, with retaliation by the regime a constant threat, the formal aspects of graffiti were completely disregarded and the primacy of the message – content over form – was practically absolute. Unlike contemporary graffiti, stylized figuration and artistic lettering were almost unheard of and the writings were crude brush-painted works as both spray paint and the stencil technique were unknown at this time in Portugal. In consuming these images, no one – from the apparatus of repression and the general public to the writers themselves – regarded these works as an artistic endeavour. The only aspect of this public disobedience that was valorised was graffiti's ability to broadcast opposition messages to the broader populace. More effective than a leafleting campaign, it was through appropriating the surfaces of the country's urban and rural fabric that political messages were most conspicuously projected.

Mural Painting and the Carnation Revolution

All of this would change dramatically with the revolution of the 25th of April. Practically overnight, political engagement turned from the cautious self-censure that had reigned for fifty years[5] to what amounted to almost an obligation to participate in active debate. Public discussion of government policy flourished during the 18 months

[1] The author lives in Lisbon (Portugal) where he works as a graffiti artist http://aruaedequemlaanda.blogspot.com/ (Accessed August 25, 2009).

[2] The revolution (25th April 1974) that liberated Portugal from the 'Estado Novo' regime had a 'revolutionary process' of which the Communist Party was one of the main driving forces. This continued until the 25th November 1975, after which the democratic 3rd Republic was established.

[3] PIDE-DGS: Polícia Internacional de Defesa do Estado – Direcção Geral de Segurança (International Police of State Defence – General Security Direction) was the political police of Salazar and (later) Marcello Caetano.

[4] PCTP-MRPP Partido Comunista dos Trabalhadores Portugueses – Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado (Portuguese Worker's Communist Party – Reorganizing Movement of the Proletarian Party).

[5] The 'Estado Novo' regime lasted from 1926 until 1974.

9.1 Proletarian heroes.

that constituted the 'revolutionary process' from April of 1974 until the 'normalization' provided by the events of November 25th, 1975, and was naturally followed by the creation of dozens of larger or smaller political parties and movements, who soon after would reclaim mural painting as an indispensable weapon to use in the service of the revolution.

Graffiti was now routinely mobilized to serve political aims and the great majority of the Portuguese artistic elite, before the revolution well gagged by state censorship or living in exile, enthusiastically assumed that it was one's social and political duty to use graffiti, first and foremost, to promote public participation in the efforts of the revolution. Thus commenced the most politically engaged period that intellectuals had enjoyed since at least the republican generation of the 1870's[6]. And even if the graphic arts were not the most affected form of political communication (while we speak about the political use of the arts) when, for instance, the musical scene shifted far more dramatically from the politically neutral 'nacional-cançonetismo' of the 60's to the highly politically engaged music of the revolutionary period; this didn't mean that big names of Portuguese graphic art, like Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, Júlio Pomar, João Abel Manta or Paula Rego would refuse to use their talents in the service of the revolution, engaging in more or less elaborate celebrations of the 'rise of the people'.

It was during this period that political mural painting in Portugal reached its zenith, with large walls being painted by dozens of political activists at a time, in broad day light, and sometimes even with the active help of civilian or military authorities. Any kind of resistance, even by the property owners of the affected surfaces, would be quickly and harshly denounced as reactionary and/or crypto-fascists, both very serious and dangerous accusations to face during the revolutionary period. Led by the far left wing parties of the time[7], graffiti murals were heavily symbolic and readily recognized by the collectivist nature of the work. None of the paintings from this period were signed in any way, rather they were seen as the result of collective efforts that effaced the individual identities of writers who participated in their creation. Furthermore they were associated with the work of different groups through aesthetic conventions inspired by Soviet and Chinese neo-

[6] This 70's generation, as it would be known in Portugal, had in its midst names like Eça de Queirós, Antero de Quental or Júlio Dinis, all of them republican activists during the latter years of the Portuguese monarchy and highly influenced by first-generation socialist and anarchist thinking.

[7] Most of them very small but very active organizations with their major activity between 1974 and 1975, but which slipped into oblivion as soon as representative democracy was definitely established on November of 1975.

9.2 Stencil technique.

realism. More simply, the nation's walls became covered by grandiloquent depictions of proletarian heroes facing the claws of fascism and capitalism, depictions that ranged in quality from true neo-realism (Figure 9.1) - that would stand up to contemporary Soviet or Chinese works - to some naive, almost child-like, paintings.

Of course with the rise and success of this propaganda technique, it would not take much time for centralist and right wing political forces to start using it as well. Soon the hammer and the sickle or the hagiographic overlapped profiles of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin (or Mao Tse-Tung, in the cases of Maoist inspired parties) so popular at the time, would find themselves accompanied by the closed fist of the Socialist Party, the three curved arrows of the Social-Democrats, and even the arrow-pierced circle of the Christian-Democrats in a *mélange* that coloured the country, astonishing both foreigners and Portuguese citizens alike. The phenomenon reached its paroxysm with anarchist inspired writings that cried out for the right of bakers to sleep with their spouses[8] and others, which, in the process of defacing MRPP[9] paintings, would transform their acronym into 'Meninos Rabinos Pintam Paredes', roughly translated as 'the mischievous graffiti boys'. It is also at this time that we find the first use of the stencil technique (Figure 9.2) often combined with free-hand painting.

By the late 70's and early 80's, the cooling of the political environment was accompanied with the decline of this kind of public intervention; old paintings began to be chipped away without maintenance or were painted over by land owners or city council workers without any kind of organized resistance (something unthinkable a few years before). The few new mural paintings that appeared during this period (usually the result of the efforts of youth or student left-wing party organizations) would once again be done by night, and were frowned upon by the police, almost mirroring attitudes prevailing before 1974 – a situation that continues to be decried (uselessly) by contemporary graffiti writers. To bring the situation up to date, unified political intervention through the medium of graffiti is quite dead, and the few remaining examples don't sum up to more than a tiny minority of graffiti genres visible on walls of places such as Lisbon or Porto.

The return of Graffiti – the American Way and the Suburbs

Not until the late 80's, early 90's, would we see the true rebirth of graffiti as a form of public expression – this time in a very different format, with very different objectives.

[8] This at a moment when the working schedule of bakers was being debated.
[9] See footnote 4.

It was born from the conjunction of two separate issues, which at the time were transforming the character of contemporary Portuguese society. The first was the appearance of canned paint in Portugal, readily offering writers an easy, inexpensive and wide-ranged colour palette. The second was the coming of age of the first Portuguese born generation of African migrants. Following the hasty decolonization of the country's former African possessions, civil wars erupted destabilizing the fledgling nations and fuelling significant migrations to Europe, and more specifically, Portugal.

African migrants and refugees from former colonies such as Mozambique, Angola, and Cabo Verde, would concentrate in the poorest suburbs of Portuguese cities (mainly Lisbon), quickly occupying the lowest rungs of the social ladder. These groups represented the parents of the next generation of writers, the first ones to use canned spray paint and who influenced a reawakening of Portuguese street art visible by the early 90's. There are a number of contingent factors contributing to this movement, but certainly two of the most important were the changing nature of the ties that connected the second generation to their African roots and the fierce racist discrimination that they faced from mainstream white society, which in practice served to impose a cultural geography of exclusion[10]. All of this would lead them to search for a different social model, and the one that provided the most inspiration (via television and cinema) was the experience of African-American inner-city youth. Thus Lisbon suburbs rapidly filled with baggy trousers and baseball caps, hip hop music and a new kind of graffiti. Of course the new form did not have anything to do with the political mural painting of the 70's, neither the techniques, the aesthetics nor the objectives were shared, and so the final product represented a radical break with everything that had gone before. The new order of things for Portuguese walls was set in motion by tagging and elaborate colour pieces that started pushing their way from the outside in. From the city limits, the 'dangerous' outcast neighbourhoods of the suburbs, they made their way to the white middle-class inner-city neighbourhoods of Lisbon, as more and more teenagers, from all economically disadvantaged and non-Portuguese ethnic backgrounds, appropriated this American-exported aesthetic to express whatever they felt needed to be expressed.

A Return to the City

It was during this new resurgence that graffiti touched my own life. Originally from a white middle-class neighbourhood situated on Lisbon's city limit, I remember how it began to 'infect' the surrounding neighbourhoods where it flourished along the urban pathways of my school days in the late 80's and early 90's. At the time, apart from some early and sterile tagging, the highly ornamented style and total primacy of form over content (an observation that still holds true of many of the colour pieces and highly elaborated tags that we see today in Lisbon) made a progressive invasion of the inner city - perhaps explaining why my own involvement as an writer would later diverge to the more politicized *bande designée* style prevalent on the continent..

Echoing the changes I have discussed above, the public discourse about street art shifted also at this time. From a somewhat prevailing attitude that used to put this kind of expression, in the 70's, under the protective umbrella of freedom of speech, new forms of graffiti began to be labelled under the category of 'vandalism'; a new meaning that unsurprisingly was associated with the fact that writers were overwhelmingly youth from poor black neighbourhoods. The authorities answer to this 'problem' ranged from paternalistic attempts at controlling it by the reformist Left (by publicly allowing some big walls to be painted, facilitating a number of huge demonstrations of the strength and quality seen in the Campolide´s wall of fame today), to an hardcore prohibitionist speech by the Right who associated tagging and other graffiti with public security issues and repeatedly called for a 'cleansing of the city' and harder punishments for the 'vandals' that soiled its walls[11].

Neither of these approaches achieved their goals, and if the more baroque colour pieces are still made in out of the way locations (Figure 9.3)[12], primarily due to police repression, the faster and simpler tagging spread all over the city, even to the most policed neighbourhoods. This was especially the case after the appearance of the large alcohol markers that allow writing on almost any surface, and that became readily incorporated as the main tagging technique. These markers replaced the use of the cork and lighter technique; something quite common in Portugal during the fascist period. The latter involved carrying a cork (typically found in wine bottles) and a cigarette lighter with which to burn the tip, instantly making a inexpensive 'marker' that could be used on almost any kind of surface. This was something so usual amongst students of the late 60's, early 70's, that anyone caught with a cork in their pockets would immediately be questioned.

But probably the most explicit demonstration of writers' disobedience towards public policies concerning themselves is the active appropriation of large segments of the city as virtual 'graffiti towns', of which the best example is Bairro Alto. Bairro Alto is one of the principal historic neighbourhoods of Lisbon and has been the centre of bohemian life since at least the beginning of the 20th century. With Salazar's banning of prostitution in the

[10] This is especially noticeable where suburban teens, most of whom were born and raised in Portugal and have Portuguese citizenship, still identify themselves as 'Angolans' 'Mozambicans' or 'Guineans', although most have never visited their parent's countries of origin.

[11] A kind of demagogical discourse that reached its paroxysm in the 2005 municipal elections in Lisbon, during which the Christian-Democrat candidate, Telmo Correia, was repeatedly filmed while 'cleaning' the city walls with a high-pressure hose while complaining about the 'vandals' who trash the city and terrorize its lawful citizens. This was something that was equally well received both by the 'vandals' and the 'lawful citizens', as we can assert both from the mocking graffiti that readily appeared (one of which pleaded 'Telminho [a tender diminutive of Telmo] please don't erase me!') and by the Christian-Democrats' election results, that for the first time in 30 years, didn't elect a single councillor.

[12] Back-streets, alleys, railroad protection walls, small enclosed squares, etc.

9.3 Baroque colour pieces on railway lines.

9.4 The graphic cacophony of Bairro Alto.

early 60's the neighbourhood started a slow decline that would only be halted in the early 80's, when the opening of several posh clubs (quickly followed by a large number of bars that capitalized on the sizable number of people that the more fashionable clubs refused) would in practice resuscitate night life in the quarter. This instigated a trend that would transform this neighbourhood of old brothels and fado taverns not only into the most popular night spot in Lisbon, but also into a haven for writers eager to show their work, not only to the general public, but also to each other. Still today, Bairro Alto is the place to go in Lisbon if someone wants to get a general overview of Portuguese street art, because sooner or later every writer goes and paints there, and all different kinds of street art are represented, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes in a graphic cacophony that further enrages those that plead for a 'cleaner city' (Figure 9.4).

Stencil and Stickers: the New Medium of the Streets

While wall writing made new inroads in the city centre, the stencil, a medium that made its first appearance during the post-revolutionary period[13], returned in strength to the streets. This represented an aesthetic departure from the tagging and colour pieces of North-American influence and at the same time, through the use of spray paint, it was a rapid way to graffiti bomb more monitored streets. Interestingly, a further characteristic of stencil writers, since the very beginning of this technique in Portugal, is a far greater engagement with political debates than the authors of conspicuous colour pieces have ever demonstrated, and this seems to have rekindled the tradition of using street art to propagate and induce public political discussion. This was particularly noticeable during the Portuguese campaign of support for East Timor's independence claims[14], and more recently, during the campaign for the liberalization of the abortion law during which several stencils appeared campaigning for the right of women to choose.

The graffiti scene in Portugal today continues to undergo change and is currently witnessing an interesting period at the same time that is, for all intents and purposes, an illegal activity. Even with the return of the possibility of legal punishment under the criminal charge of 'vandalism' (although this is unlikely)[15], never before have there been so many writers working on the streets, almost certainly surpassing[16], the period of 1974-75 - that peek of both public political participation and public art production. In Lisbon, for instance, it is almost impossible to find a single street without some kind of illegal intervention, from baroquely elaborated American-inspired colour-pieces to the classical 'Lava-me Porco!' (Wash me pig!) finger-written on dusty cars.

Even in the small towns of inland Portugal, more or less elaborated colour pieces appear suddenly in the least probable of locations[17], an unthinkable situation even ten years ago. But apart from the quantitative aspect of the phenomenon, the qualitative side must also be considered, and on this point one can say that after twenty years of mixed experiences, Portuguese writers who dedicate themselves to colour pieces have achieved a degree of skill that enables them to compete with the most talented of their role models: inner-city north-American youth. The use of the stencil technique (which returned long after the advent of spray paint) is now wide spread use through out the country, already presenting a number of *virtuosos*[18] that merely through exhibiting their work mute the most adamant voices for a 'cleaner city'.

Finally, the most recent form of public intervention has made its appearance on Portuguese streets: the sticker. In this method, homemade stickers illustrating personal tags with more or less complex messages have appeared on Bairro Alto's streets since the early years of this century. In my view this is a derivation of the bombing movement that usually relied exclusively on stencilling and free-hand spray. Allowing a quicker and safer way to remake the message of the streets, even more so because stickering falls between the cracks of Portuguese law[19], advocates of this medium usually share the same social space with us – the stencil-writers – featuring a similar degree of political and social involvement with the same kind of dark humour that has come to be expected from stencil pieces[20].

Acceptance and Appropriation: Graffiti as Trendy

The latest proof of the strength of Portuguese street art is the way it has begun to be incorporated within the consuming chain of mass capitalism. In the early months of 2007, highly elaborated large round stickers began appearing first in Bairro Alto, and then throughout Lisbon. Featuring several stylized images that aesthetically belong with the most contemporary and sophisticated graffiti movement, the stickers contained the single phrase: 'Kita o teu telemóvel!'[21]. In Portuguese 'Quitar' means to illegally upgrade something and it is usually associated with exceptional alterations that street-racers make to car engines. However, in this case the 'Qu' is substituted for a 'K', a letter that doesn't belong in the Portuguese alphabet[22], but which is typical in graffiti more generally. Both the quality and the quantity of the stickers raised immediate suspicions among Bairro Alto's strollers, but popular consensus had to wait some weeks for its meaning to become clear. Then on prime-time TV a commercial was aired that showed a 'rebellious graffiti crew' climbing the head office tower of one of the three big Portuguese cellular phone companies to paint a huge colour piece that featured the same 'rebellious' phrase, still without any direct branding mentioned[23], but eminently comprehensible

[13] Good examples of which were the closed fist of the Socialist Party or the stencil that demanded a popular invasion of Parliament.

[14] A period that produced, besides several anonymous stencil graffiti, the most recent example of big brush mural painting done in Lisbon (since the 70's): a huge and colourful demonstration of support for the East-Timorese resistance sited on the footstep of the United States embassy compound, something that almost created a diplomatic incident, only recently cleaned by the City Council.

[15] Of course, the degree of police response, usually quite lenient, varies enormously accordingly to the location of the 'crime' and the reactions of the writer. From my personal experience, I can assert that the best course of action is not to try to run from them, unless escape has a very good chance of success. Apart from this, a calm and personable demeanour is usually quite disarming for police officers, who when faced with the recognizable self-confidence of the educated classes shift quickly from a typically over-aggressive attitude to a more serene, even polite, posture; at which point you are halfway to being released after a quick identification and a symbolic slap-on-the-wrist. Of course, being white-skinned helps with racist Portuguese police.

[16] Based on the sheer number of painted walls visible across Lisbon.

[17] This year while visiting a small town in Algarve, I discovered the work of a crew that mainly paints the walls that enclose cultivated fields on the outskirts of Olhão, offering us the incongruous view of herds of cattle amidst large and accomplished colour pieces.

[18] Names like Dolk, Skran or the Royal Fish Club crew.

[19] Unlike painting graffiti on surfaces (with brushes or canned spray paint), stickering is not formally forbidden by Portuguese law, unless the wall's owner expressly forbids it in a plaque.

[20] A good example of this was a memorable sticker that appeared in Lisbon in 2006 that stated in big, capitalized, letters 'PORTUGAL LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT' and then in smaller letters 'the last one to leave would they please turn off the lights and lock the airport's door'.

[21] 'Upgrade your cellular phone'

[22] The K, W and Y are not used in Portuguese.

[23] That would come later, with several commercials featuring what one can only classify as caricatures of suburban youth (presented with 'street names' like Xip Daddy or Xip Mamma) urging teenagers to buy the latest package of cellular phones of the above brand.

9.5 Black cat stencil.

by local residents. And if this example does not suffice, some months later a deodorant brand presented (again on prime-time TV) a commercial that claimed the superiority of its product's ability to not leave white marks in your armpits by attempting to paint graffiti (on a black wall) with its leading spray[24].

These examples, apart from demonstrating how capitalism craves and requires hegemony to sell itself as 'rebellious' and even 'marginal'[25], show the way that these new forms of street art are being incorporated within Portuguese mainstream culture. As it seems, graffiti is the latest move on our flourishing publicity industry, both in the TV adds front (with writers as 'official rebels'), as in the (quite recent) front of graffiti styled tagging.

[24] Something that deserved the quick response by some anonymous stencil-writer in Campolide, who painted a girl raising her arm with the caption 'Protect the white stains!!'.

[25] Trend that seemed to reached its paroxysm, with the mass production of t-shirts featuring an iconic Che Guevara.

Coming Clean

My own involvement with graffiti came rather late in life. Having little interest or sufficient talent to paint elaborate colour pieces in backstreet allies, it was only after discovering the stencil approach that I found a way to express my own views on major streets, where my work could reach the largest number of people, and even better, with the possibility of endless repetition. In the beginning I went through an 'experiential period', where I discovered the limits of the technique while trying to achieve the degree of dexterity that stencil-painting demands. It was also during this period that I began to delimit my own territory, an area restricted to streets that could be reached by foot or bicycle.

If it is true that there are city areas that are 'open' and where anybody goes to paint and show their own work, a kind of

9.6 Corto Maltese, after Pratt.

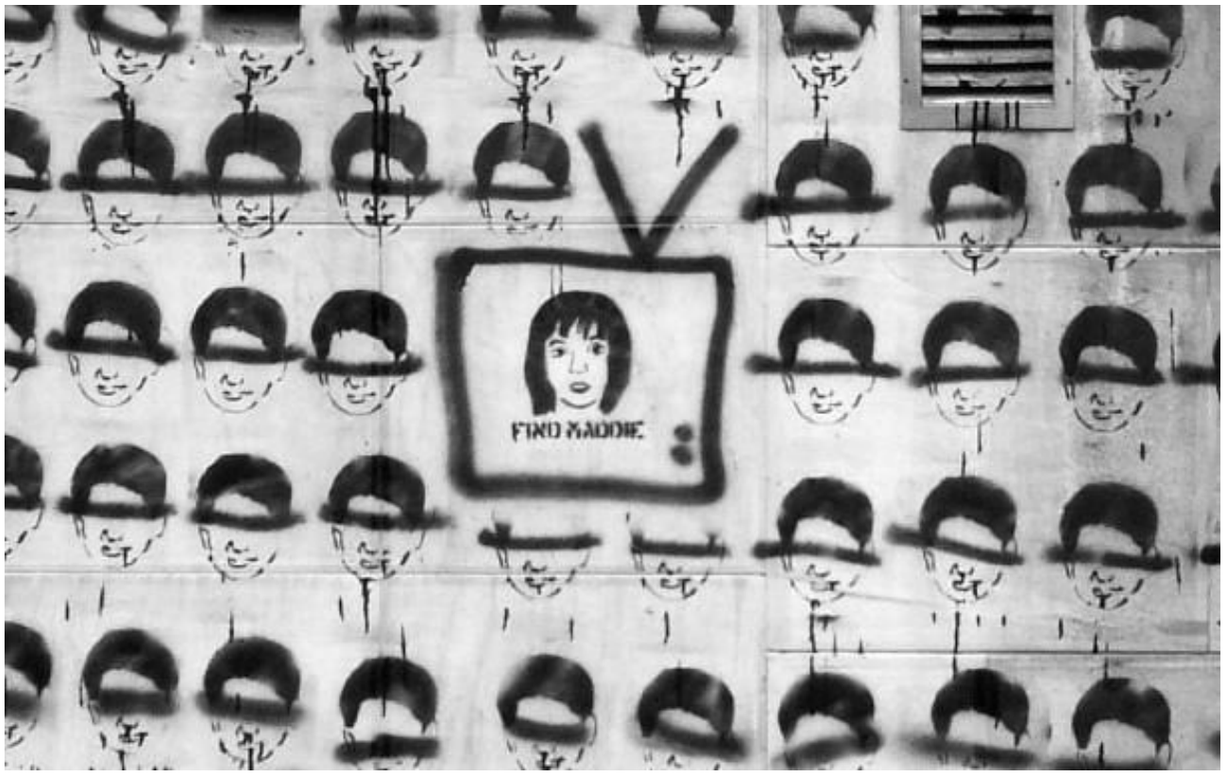
9.7 'Capitalism is beautiful'.

common ground to all writers[26], then it is also true that for the attentive stroller it is rather easy to recognize which tags and crew names belong to different areas, inevitably creating a city's graffiti geography. Reflecting on my own participation in this, I share my usual work-area (Benfica, in the northwest of Lisbon) with the GVS crew (Graffiti Vandal Squad), who mainly produce large colour pieces that are hegemonic on the walls that skirt Benfica's railroad; with the writer 'Merda' (shit), an individual who regularly daubs the word along the length of Benfica road (over 2 kilometers)[27] and with a far-right writer whose tag is a sticker figure with an inflated round head; besides of course, dozens of other anonymous writers.

This territorial demarcation was something quite natural for me, on some level being connected to my high-school days, when local boys would tag their own street and would become truly offended if outsiders were successful in leaving their own marks. So with my return to graffiti,

[26] Bairro Alto and the Campolide's wall of fame are Lisbon's best examples of this, but the exterior wall of the Social Sciences faculty on Berne avenue fulfils this role for politically engaged graffiti also.

[27] A work that caught the eye of the media, which describe it as both pure vandalism and irreverent art



9.8 'Other Maddies' mural.

my first move served to demarcate my own 'working grounds', by painting my tag (a graphic representation) on the walls of my apartment flat; throughout what I consider my neighbourhood and its boundaries (Benfica city limit to the north, the Zoo square to the south, the railroad to west and the Catholic University area to east).

Only after this I started organizing my work in two basic lines. This includes a more graphic one, intended to reach passers-by while they walk past; and a purely textual variation (done in large lettering with very short and clear sentences), intended to reach car traffic and which I attempt to site in conspicuous places for drivers, offering them such quips like 'You're not the content of your wallet' or 'You are what you put into the world'.

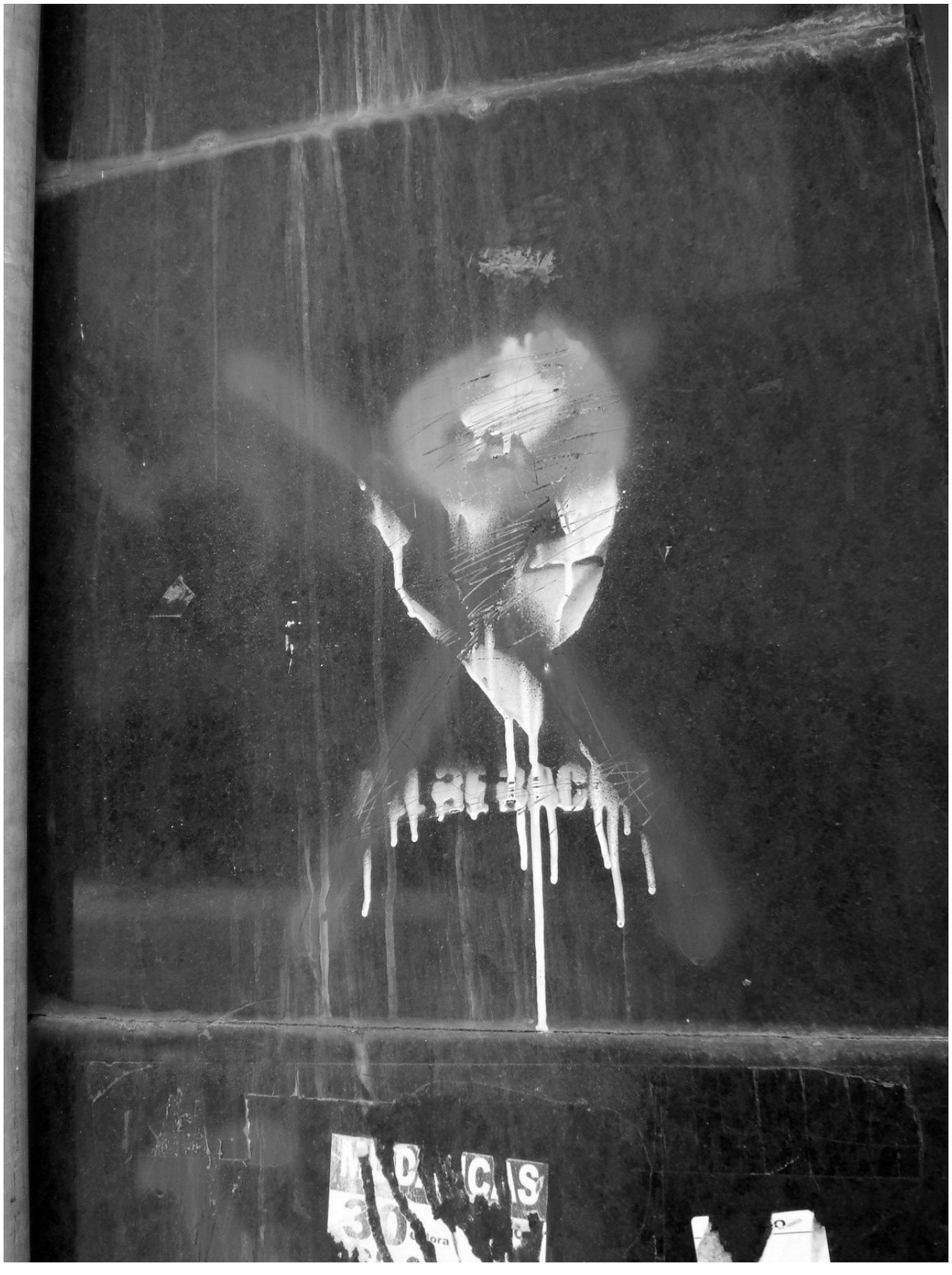
From the very beginning I thought graffiti to be the perfect means to voice my opinions about society, and the biggest satisfaction that I take from my work is when I overhear street conversations provoked by something that I have painted some nights before. Being a fairly politicized person, it would be impossible for me not to try using this medium to induce public interaction at a very local level. And so, from day one, my anarchist leanings showed in the choice of my tag, first an enraged black cat, a classic anarchist symbol since at least the 19th century[28] (Figure 9.5), and now, a kind of jack-in-the-box carrying a lit bomb with a chilling smile.

In this way I have assumed a conscious debt to the politically motivated artists of the 1970's – even if not sharing their painting techniques or aesthetic conventions (I've never painted with brush, and my 'style' is far cruder than the colourful neo-realism of the Marxist crews of the time) the idea of a public art with a public purposes is all there. However, this does not mean neglecting what I have learned from the writers of colour pieces, of which the most important has undoubtedly been the 'Props' tradition, which is to say the long-running custom of painting tributes to other artists; something that I have readily incorporated in my way of working (Figure 9.6), although rather than attempt to reach other writers, as is typical within this movement, I have sought to reach a much broader audience[29].

Taking my cue from the political writers of the Fascist period, I usually paint in hot reaction to something. My personal vision is that if the social, political and economic system in which we live has the ability (and most of the times, the legal right) to crush the individual citizen (or to be more precise, the 'consumer'), the last remaining act of resistance is to complain, and so this is my own form of public protest. Thus, the way that financial corporations act in Portugal (striving to maximize their already oversized profits by tax evasion tactics, while fleeing from any kind of social responsibility to their own workers) justifies one

[28] 'Le chat sabot' the black cat that French anarchist workers painted on freshly sabotaged industrial machinery, ″thus chastising the exploitation of employees.

[29] Neither of my 'Props' were to graffiti writers: the first one to Hugo Pratt, the creator of Corto Maltese; and the latter to Raphael Bordalo Pinheiro, the father of Portuguese comics and creator of Zé Povinho, a character that resonates with the Portuguese in the same way that John Bull does for the British or Uncle Sam does for Americans.



9.9 Crossed out 'I'll be back'.

of my favourite works 'Capitalism is beautiful!' (Figure 9.7) or my depiction of our bank barons[30] as the pirates they are, something that I usually paint on bank, insurance or temporary work agencies (all very successful businesses in contemporary Portugal). Similarly, the hysterical way that mass media have ground us down with the Madeleine McCann affair lies at the heart of the *raison d'être* for my 'Other Maddies' mural (Figure 9.8), which attempts to point out the deafening silence that envelopes all the other children that, even if not as white, blonde and photogenic as little Madeleine, have disappeared too. In the same manner that the victory of Salazar[31] on the TV show 'Greatest Portuguese', something that fuelled a long-needed debate about the way political memory is (or isn't) being passed on from the last generation who lived through Portuguese fascism to the first democratic-born generation, was mainly what made me portray him with a smile and the caption drawn from the film 'Terminator' of 'I'll be back!'[32] (Figure 9.9). And finally, the joyful way in which Portuguese are slowly becoming impoverished in front of a TV set that permanently promotes a life-style impossible to most, more than justifies my 'Nativity'.

And after all this is said, I must underline the unoriginality of my own stand on graffiti and the political use of the stencil technique in the Portuguese context. In a moment when the country was remembering the regicide of 1908[33], and in typical paradoxical fashion where the Republican authorities unveiled a plaque to the murdered king and prince, a graffiti immediately appeared on a near wall demanding equal commemorations for the two murderers who perished in the act[34], which was soon echoed all over the city: a stencilled double portrait of the murderers with the caption 'O rei morreu! Vivam os regicidas!' (The king is dead! Long live the king killers!). In conclusion, if painting something might constitute an act of violence against society, it is relatively innocuous when compared with all the violence that those outside of power endure on a daily basis, or, as Brecht would put it, it is easy to point out the violence of a river that spills over its margins, if we forget about the enduring margins that constrain its flow.

[30] A series that already includes Belmiro de Azevedo (owner of the Sonae group), Ricardo Salgado (head of the Espírito Santo family) and Paulo Teixeira Pinto (the former CEO of the Millenium bank), but which is still on-going.

[31] António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970): minister of Economy in 1928. It was with his nomination to the office of prime-minister in 1932 that this former professor established the Estado Novo (New State) regime; a fascist-inspired dictatorship that would last to 1974. Literally falling from his chair in 1968, Salazar was removed from power by his own inner-circle and remained isolated (but deceived into thinking he was still ruling) until his death in 1970. Marcello Caetano, succeed him only to be overthrown on the 25th April, 1974, in what is remembered as the Carnation Revolution.

[32] A graffito that has been repeatedly defaced or painted over, a reaction that speaks volumes about the willingness of most Portuguese to be confronted with the face of the former dictator, and that, for me personally, was quite reassuring.

[33] On the 1st February 1908, King Carlos I and his heir, Luís Filipe, were murdered in central Lisbon while arriving in a landau. Their murderers, a small group of republican radicals (two of them were killed in the act), were elevated to the status of heroes even before the proclamation of the Republic in 1910 (shocking foreigners with both the revulsion that Lisbon demonstrated towards the royal funerals, and the huge quantity of flowers that mysteriously appeared at the murderers grave side); and later (with the military dictatorship and Estado Novo regime in 1926 and 1933) labelled as 'terrorists' by the official historiography.

[34] Manuel Buiça and Alfredo Costa.

In London You're Never More Than 10 Feet from a Rat (Stencil): The Rat and Urban Folklore

Paul Cowdell

Graffiti say a lot about residents' attitudes to a city and their life there. One of the more striking and entertaining series of images across the City and West End of London in recent years has been the stencilled 'urban rat' sequence by the graffitist Banksy. This chapter was first presented as a paper shortly before Banksy became the collectible darling of the art market he is now. Many of the rat images have been erased[1].

Banksy's images offer ironic commentaries on the status of the bulk of the urban population, on politics, and on the experience of London for the poor, the marginalised and the disaffected. Rats in heavy jewellery listen to beatboxes. Armed with power-drills they dig up the city, or train mortars on parliament. They bounce basketballs beneath signs warning 'No Ball Games'. They take photographs (Figure 10.1), and carry placards capturing the full ambivalence of urban life: 'Because I'm worthless', declares one. There is also some commentary on the world of artistic representation itself: one image is captioned 'Pest modernism'.

As Banksy comments on his website: 'Rats have killed more people than all the wars and revolutions of the past 1000 years combined. They carry up to 35 different diseases. They are impossible to fully eradicate and they have brought entire civilisations to their knees. If you feel small, insignificant, and dirty they are the ultimate role model'. At the same time, though, these are ambiguous images – in Banksy's words, 'Win the rat race and you're still a rat'.

As a folklorist I was struck by this use of the rat as an urban image, as it fits neatly into the context of the folklore about rats. I had been conducting a field survey into popular beliefs about rats in London, particularly beliefs regarding the size of the rat population relative to the human population and the physical proximity of rats to humans. I examined how this related to previous recorded lore, because I wanted to see if there was any change from rural to urban beliefs. If there was, such a shift might illuminate Londoners' attitude towards their home city, as Banksy's images suggest: 'Welcome to Hell' declares one of his commuter-rats.

I examined this in the context of the natural history of rats, to understand the behaviour being reflected. I also wanted to see if the folklore differentiated between species of rat and whether there was any corresponding articulation of alienness in the lore about rats. Banksy's images are certainly all-embracing.

The two British species arrived at different times; until recently it was thought that the Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*) had arrived in the thirteenth century, probably on ships returning from the Crusades in Palestine (Fitter 1990: 59-60). Archaeological evidence has now placed it in Britain in the Roman period (Rackham 1979: 112-120). There is better evidence for the larger Brown or Norway Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), which was first recorded in Britain in 1728 (Barnett 2001: 18-19). Although called Norwegian they probably arrived on ships from Denmark. Brown Rats have now established themselves as the dominant specie here, so I wanted to see if there was any identification of them as 'foreign', as there is with grey squirrels, for instance. When they first arrived, for example, they were called Hanoverian Rats: this had nothing to do with their arrival route, and everything to do with popular resentment of the German monarchy.

The most striking thing about rats is their reputation for cleverness, which is allied to a capacity for destruction. Banksy certainly taps into this – his rats are smart (jumping with parachutes, working as waiters). They are also highly adept with destructive gadgetry like power-tools (one, wearing ear protectors, takes a power drill to a sign saying 'Beware Anti-Vandal Paint'), and given to spilling toxic chemicals (Figure 10.2).

Actually rats are not particularly smarter than other rodents, but they are neophobic, a term coined for them by the biologist S. Anthony Barnett (2001: 56-62), whose sober study of the natural history of rats is extremely readable and useful[2]. Like other mammals, rats enjoy exploring new terrains, i.e. they are neophilic. However, they are wary of new objects in familiar terrains, i.e. they are neophobic within familiar surroundings.

This has pest-control implications: if you want to poison or trap a rat, you cannot just put down poison or a trap where you know they go as it will alarm them. You have to put down food on a regular basis until they get used to it, *then*

[1] The best available resources for these images are online. Banksy's own website is at <http://www.banksy.co.uk>, and there is also a useful archive of his images at <http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/Banksy/banksy.htm>.

[2] The discussion of neophobia and neophilia is at 56-62.

10.1 Temple Station, London, WC2, 2007.

poison it, and then poison it again, before they can restore the population through reproduction.

Barnett offers evidence that the neophobia is restricted to those species living commensal with humans, which includes both British species. In other words, the neophobia is itself an evolutionary response to the perils of living with human populations as what one epidemiologist has called a 'weed animal' (McNeill 1979: 44-45). Robert Sullivan, in his book on rats in Manhattan, says that the rat catcher is a more natural part of the rat's environment than the observer or avoider of rats (Sullivan 2005: 130).

This would explain why, despite having the appropriate characteristics, rats do not seem to turn up as Trickster figures in mythology: those species that live apart from humans (like other Trickster animals, such as coyotes) have not evolved the defence mechanisms that make the commensal species seem intelligent. Barnett says 'We can now…see…clearly why rats have been called diabolically clever and why today we say that they are nothing of the sort'. He quotes a psychologist that 'Most of the books… have been all about animal intelligence, never about animal stupidity…[illustrating] the well-nigh universal tendency in human nature to find the marvellous wherever it can' (Barnett 2001: 62-63).

One problem with the natural history of the rat *vis-à-vis* the folklore is that in the earliest recorded examples of folkloric belief, rats and mice are conflated. The Latin word *mus*, for example, encompassed rats, mice, martens, sable, ermine. One late Latin charm talks about 'mures et glires': this is literally mice and dormice, but the distinction seems to be between good and bad rodents (dormice being edible). Similarly, the Greek μυσ also included rats, hamsters and other rodents. The earliest clear distinction in the British Isles was made by Gerald of Wales in the twelfth century, talking about 'the larger species of mice, commonly called rats'. As black rats had been here since the fourth century, this suggests that there had been no clear terminological distinction throughout the intervening period.

This confusion poses some problems when studying early superstitions, but it does not undermine our assessments, not least because it continues into the modern world. (I was quite surprised to find that some of my informants were not sure of the difference between them). A 1748 dream-book analyses dreams of being attacked by rats, and says: 'Mice are pretty much of the same nature, but not in so high a degree' (Opie and Tatem 1989: 323). This sums up their relationship in folklore as well.

In earlier writings, therefore, 'rats' may well include other rodents. The important thing is that rats have had around

10.2 'Toxic Rat' (Photo: Snappa2006).

10,000 years of co-habitation with humans (accepting Barnett's hypothesis that commensal living probably began with the first settled agriculture). The idea that they are smart (even if they are conflated with mice and other rodents) has had a long time to sink in.

Rats have been long supposed to have uncanny knowledge of forthcoming disaster. In the fourth century BC Theophrastus satirised the Superstitious Man who is more concerned with the omen of rodents gnawing a hole in his meal-bag than with repairing the hole itself. Where Theophrastus was describing the effect of natural food-gathering, though, superstition is also attached to general gnawing right through to the modern period (Figure 10.3).

Pliny in AD77 credited rodents with foreseeing the Marsian war by gnawing shields, and the subsequent death of the general Carbo at Clusium by gnawing the straps on his shoes. The same superstition is described sceptically by Christian writers like St Augustine of Hippo (AD 396). Chaucer mentions 'Hem that bileeven on divynailes…by gnawynge of rattes' in the *Parson's Tale*. In *Astrologaster* (1620) Melton said it was 'a great signe of ill lucke, if Rats gnaw a mans cloathes', and in the eighteenth century Grose recorded 'Rats gnawing the hangings of a room, is reckoned the forerunner of a death in the family'. The superstition survived into the twentieth century. In 1909,

10.3 Rat with baseball bat, Kentish Town, 2005 (Photo: Jeblad).

rats nibbling furniture was recorded as an omen of death from Worcestershire (Opie and Tatem 1989: 322-323).

Note that it is not the *presence* of the rats that is ominous but their behaviour. For all that it is treated as ominous, gnawing is a recognised behavioural phenomenon. Rats have a flap of skin that closes behind their teeth when they gnaw, thus preventing them from choking to death on whatever they are chewing. This is why gnawing on concrete pillars and suchlike does not kill them. I would argue that this lends weight to the idea that they are in some way uncanny.

It has been suggested that the foresight of disaster stems from the association of rodents with human souls: they are *ipso facto* ominous. St Gertrude of Nivelles, the saint most commonly invoked against rats, may be associated with them through her devotion to souls in the (recently-disbanded) purgatory. In several European legends, rats appear as the agents of divine retribution (very much like Banksy's vengeful rats with heavy weaponry), or as the souls of the murdered avenging their own deaths. One German story tells of a famine in 970: Bishop Hatto of Mayence confined starving villagers to a barn and torched it to reduce food demands. He was then pursued and destroyed by an army of rats. (There is no historical evidence for this incident, by the way, much less for Hatto's fate.) Scandinavian legend tells how rats attacked and ate Earl Asbjorn after he had murdered St Knut at Odense in 1086. A nineteenth century Sussex man was haunted by evil spirits in the form of rats: at night, his neighbours heard him pleading with them to leave him alone (Simpson and Roud 2000: 290; Radford 1961: 280).

It is thus understandable how sudden movements of rats (and, indeed, mice) come to be unlucky. Banksy plays on this with his image of rats parachuting (Figure 10.4). Their foresight of impending disaster makes their exodus from a building or a ship ominous. 'Rats leaving a sinking ship' is, of course, proverbial, and fate was not to be tempted on board ships. For nineteenth century Banffshire fishermen the rat brought bad luck, so the word was not mentioned while lines were being baited. Into the twentieth century Hull fishermen thought rats should not be named aboard, referring instead to 'long-tails', while in East Anglia people referred to 'Josephs' (Opie and Tatem 1989: 323; Simpson and Roud 2000: 290).

The exodus of rats from a house was also supposed to presage some disaster, often to the building's fabric, an idea echoed in the determination with which Banksy's rats operate their power drills or saws. Equally, though, an *influx* of rats meant bad luck. A seventeenth century Irish example, of rats running over a house in an area where formerly they were seen only infrequently, was understood with hindsight as a portent of the 1641 rebellion. However, the ambivalence of their position can be seen here, too: in nineteenth century Aberdeen, the arrival of rats was taken as a harbinger of wealth (Opie and Tatem 1989: 323).

Coupled with the rat's supposed intelligence, this

10.4 Gentleman rat, 2007 (Photo: Britta Frahm).

dynamism leaves them susceptible to charms[3]. The earliest attested form is the *written* charm. A tenth century Greek agricultural treatise the *Geoponika*, almost certainly using earlier material, describes writing the following and pinning it up in an infested field: 'I conjure you, O mice who inhabit here, not to injure me yourselves, nor to allow any other mouse to do so; and I give you this field…But if I find you residing here in the future…I will cut you up into seven pieces' (Newell 1892: 29-30).

This remains the standard model for verbally charming rats from one site to another. A verse form may have been known in Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as 'rhyming Irish rats' was a commonplace. This may be a racial slur, rather than reflecting ethnologic practice, but there are also contemporary echoes of such charms. In the 1950s there are records of Erse charms being pushed into rat-holes to conjure them away (Radford 1961: 280).

In a Boston letter of 1888 the householder announced that, on reflection, he thought the rats should move because he was going to be doing all sorts of work to the house that would disturb their environment. If they did not move,

[3] I examine verbal charms used against rats at greater length in Cowdell 2009.

10.5 Rat with microphone, Chalk Farm (Photo: Justinc).

though, he said he would have to poison them. There are also European examples. In Scotland the rhyme 'Ratton and mouse, Lea' the puir woman's house, Gang awa' owre by to 'e mill, And there ane and a' ye'll get your fill' was pinned up, while from the Ardennes came a note saying 'Rats, male and female, you who have eaten the heart of St Gertrude, I conjure you in her name to go into the plain of Rocroi'. In the 1960s similar formulations were used against infestations of mice in Scotland (Newell 1892: 23, 26-27; Opie and Tatem 1989: 324).

There is something almost legalistic about these charms: indeed, one sixteenth century French official issued a summons against the rats ravaging the crops. Often the note was smeared with grease and pushed into rat-holes. (Given their neophobia, the efficacy of this can be guessed at.) Whether echoing these notes to rats directly, or more generally playing on the idea of their intelligence, Banksy uses the notion of rats' literacy in his image of animals with placards.

As significant as the conjuration, though, is the offer of an alternative home. This also applies to the other main form of charming rats, by noise. In some French examples, the rats are 'conjured' to an alternative residence by beating a kitchen pan with a harrow tooth while reciting a charm. The more common model, though, is through music, as indicated by Banksy's image of rats listening to hip-hop.

The Pied Piper of Hameln is the best-known such story, thanks to the Grimm brothers and Robert Browning, but there are a number of variations. The rats are not always conjured by music, although generally a fife or flute is used (Umlauft 1944: 97-100). In some stories there are no rats: the stories are simply about child abduction. At least one such story ('Hurdy-Gurdy Player Abducts Children') also has a musical motif (Kuhn and Schwartz 1848: 89-90). This is worth noting, because there is frequently a subtext of alien-ness to these stories: in some Hameln stories, for example, the children are taken to Transylvania; an Austrian version articulates the foreign even more explicitly, having the children sold at market in Constantinople.

Other examples of charming also have a musical component. A 1950s Cornish rat-charmer whistled, causing the rats to come to him, or at least to stop running away: he then picked them up and disposed of them. It is not recorded how a nineteenth century Cheshire rat-charmer at Peover led rats from one farm to another, although he said he could not make them cross a road (Figure 10.5).

An interesting Chinese tale, *How Ma Hsiang Rid Hangchow of Rats*, is on all the Pied Piper websites: although not quite analogous to that story, it displays all the charm elements seen so far. Ma Hsiang writes out a charm that is pinned up. He drums on a bowl with his chopsticks, whistles, and the rats appear. Summoning the largest rat, he asks it to leave using the usual formulae. The rats comply (Giles 1948: 117-119).

The dominant rat is an important feature of urban ratlore. In earlier iconography, the Rat King sits on a throne of rats knotted together by the tails. That phenomenon (also known as a Rat King) occurs naturally: there is evidence that rats feed the afflicted individuals in the nest. A recent urban legend about rats leading blind colleagues around by a straw also takes up this development of intelligence into co-operation.

This is not so far from Banksy's mutually co-operative underclass rats, one of whom declares boldly 'We will win'[4]. Another, pen in hand, has written 'No surrender'. These are highly politicised images, dependent on a certain respect and sympathy. In one image, stencilled on the south

[4] See, most strikingly, the image of victorious revolutionary rats at http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/Banksy/Banksy_rat_revolutionaries.htm (Accessed June 22, 2007).

bank of the Thames, two rats train their mortar across the river at the Houses of Parliament.

In discussion about the King Rat, several of my informants talked of such co-operation in equally political, although unsympathetic, terms. None of my informants knew about the throne iconography, but several talked of a King Rat as a large/dominant animal (one spoke of it circling and marking territory). One informant claimed that 'rats are solitary animals that only form packs when there is a King Rat (which is very rare)'. Gillian Bennett recorded a respondent whose father-in-law saw a horde of rats being led from one part of Manchester to another by a King Rat, 'the biggest rat of the whole shebang' (Simpson and Roud 2000: 290). This story occurs in rural areas too: a Tal-y-Bont farmer described a rat pack being led across fields by a white rat.

Bennett's informant, though, was talking about rats moving *within* the city: from my findings I have seen no evidence of Londoners believing in the possibility of moving rats out of an area. The representation of rats as endemic is related to the urban experience. One informant moved to London from west Kent and was told by his father that he would only be one metre from a rat when he arrived; another moved to the city for the first time and was told by her landlady she would only be 10 feet from one. Note that this is exactly the kind of welcome to the big city offered by Banksy's rat with the placard saying 'Welcome to hell'. This stresses the urban identity, and the shift towards this position can already be seen in late nineteenth century towns bordering on agricultural land.

In Cambridge, for example, ratting was organised for the entertainment of undergraduates and others from the late nineteenth century. Enid Porter mentions 'rat hunts', but her description sounds more like a rat pit, where terriers are dropped in with rats that they then destroy. This took place in an area (Cambridgeshire) where earlier in the century it was believed that carrying a dried rats' tail would ward off the marsh ague. This tends to corroborate a shift from rural to urban beliefs (Porter 1969: 234, 271). Women in Soar Lane smuggled rats to the rat-pit at the Ship Inn under their blouses. In the same pub one man nailed rats to the bar and tore them to pieces with his teeth, while at Braunston 'within living memory' of 1985, 'a man won bets by biting live rats to death' (Palmer 1985: 113-114).

This is some distance from the verbal charms and a lot closer to my London survey. A Victorian sewerman said there was nothing romantic about rats, suggesting there might have been previously. Although I was asking about specific popular beliefs, it became clear that all my respondents saw rats as an endemic part of urban life. An informant from Alberta in Canada – a place without a rat problem, thanks to a highly effective pest control programme – exemplified this. She knew her home city was rat-free, but did not believe it.

One of the first questions I asked my informants was how many rats to people there are. Most informants had not heard figures, although about a third stated definitely that there are more rats than people. The figures they did give were two, four, eight, 10 and 12 to every person (this last figure was reported second-hand from a chef in a riverfront restaurant, and thus one of the few sources with direct constant experience of rats). According to Sullivan, the equivalence of human/rat populations is a widely-believed urban legend in New York, although it is based on the doubtful extrapolation from some dodgy guesstimates (Sullivan 2005: 18-20). The 1995 National Rodent Census gave a *national* figure of one in 20 British properties being infested.

Even some 'authoritative' figures seem dependent on popular belief. The National Pest Technicians' Association Rodent Survey Report 2001, for example, criticised local authorities for not returning figures on Black Rats. According to the 1993 Red Data Book on British Mammals, though, the Black Rat was one of the most endangered mammals in the country, with a possible total population of only 1000: its numbers may be increasing, but it is probable that most authorities genuinely do not have a problem with them.

The most reliable estimate I have seen for Brown Rats gave a total UK population of 40 million in 1994. This was around two-thirds that of the human population. Rats are notoriously difficult to count accurately; even so, it must be stressed that this is a *comparison* figure only. There is no direct correlation between the sizes of the two populations, although there is between their habitats[5]. That popular belief creates such a connection is indicative of the role rats play in imagining the city.

Although figures are mentioned for London, more respondents saw their proximity in physical rather than numerical terms[6]. They all believed they were close to a rat. The most frequent distance quoted was 10 feet, but the spread was one metre to 'not more than 100 yards'. There was a definite sense of urban danger about some of them: 'there's one round every corner', or 'I know from experience we're close'. Despite the almost unanimous association of rats with dirt and poverty, though, my informants rarely *localised* them. In fact many informants, particularly those living in the West End, associated rats predominantly with their own areas. Based on personal experience some identified them with their own homes or gardens. Only one (living in Chelsea) associated them mostly with poorer areas in the east and north of the city rather than the south-west where she lived.

This is striking because several American urban legends explicitly localise them in poorer areas, and connect them directly with an *ethnic* Other. In the tale of the Mexican Pet, for example, the rat is mistaken for a Chihuahua and

[5] This is noted, although not explored, on the urban legends website snopes.com in the section 'Country Rat, City Rat', http://www.snopes.com/critters/wild/rats.asp (Accessed June 22, 2007).

[6] For a more poetic view of this, see the 'Rats and Pigeons' page of derelictlondon.com. The existence of this website emphasizes my point about the ambivalence of Londoners' view of their home http://www.derelictlondon.com/rats_and_pigeons_m.htm (Accessed June 22, 2007).

10.6 Politician rat, Bond St, 2008 (Photo: Boulanger.IE).

smuggled into the US (Brunvand 1989, 21-23) [7]. When New York's affluent Park Avenue was infested with rats, it was suggested that they had migrated from the poor black area of Harlem. As with some of the 'Pied Piper' stories, and the slurs against the Irish, rats are used to represent the threat of incursions of migrant populations.

The rat is definitely treated as Other in urban legends that are as common here as in the US, like the Kentucky Fried Rat, or rat urine on coke cans. The informant cited earlier claiming rats are solitary, formulated them as urban moral panic figures: when rat-packs are formed, he said, they will 'rape' female rats, but even this was not articulated as *racial*. Recent press reports, though, have claimed that Black Rat numbers are increasing with new arrivals coming on ships from eastern Europe. This tends to support the idea that rats *are* also racialised as Other. In racial terms Banksy uses the rat – so often used to express hostility to migrant populations – as an inclusive representative of urban populations. Whether with beatbox, umbrella or power-drill, the rat is simply an urban dweller.

Throughout the recent folklore, rats remain ambiguous symbols. Liz Thompson describes toshers' beliefs in a queen rat, who would turn into an attractive girl and seduce a tosher. In return for his silence she would allow him to find money and valuables lost in the sewers. If he spoke about it, though, he would drown (Simpson and Roud 2000: 290-1). This is closer to the ambivalence outlined earlier, and it also reflects the attitude of *contemporary* Londoners to the rats. According to one of my respondents, 'The cockneys say that Canary Wharf has come so far that even the Rats are eating Lobster'. That neatly sums up the relationship as borne out in the popular beliefs. The beliefs allow rats to be a dangerous Other without removing them from the city environment. In Banksy's images the rats become the

[7] This and Brunvand's other books provide an invaluable compendium of such legends. There is also some useful material online. See particularly http://www.snopes.com/critters/lurkers/mexpet.htm (Accessed June 22, 2007).

real voice of city: 'You lie', says one to the city at large (Figure 10.6).

From here it is only a short step to some sort of identification with them, too. One American woman told a World Service journalist proudly that her city 'had as many rats as New York, you know'. This is the ambivalence that Banksy taps into. This is urban degradation, urban existence, urban resistance. The rats are articulated as pests, certainly, but they are such a constant presence they are almost laudable. 'London doesn't work' proclaims one, evidently a Londoner. Another tells commuters 'Go back to bed', while a third carries his briefcase and umbrella as part of the commuter rat-race. Banksy's rats are articulated as Other, but also as Self, reflecting the construction of the city itself in the popular imagination. 'You laugh', Banksy has written, 'but one day we'll be in charge'.

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Afterword

Victor Buchli

The collection of papers assembled here by Oliver and Neal provide us with intriguing insights into the nature of graffiti and the role such studies might have for the development of archaeological research, particularly as it relates to the archaeology of the recent past. Graffiti's inherent ephemerality (yet remarkable endurance) and its marginal status of being underfoot and below view, characterise the sorts of intriguing insights the archaeology of the recent past can provide for the examination of those aspects of social life that are themselves marginal and excluded thereby revealing the means by which established hierarchies and their social consequences are conceived and maintained. What these papers show is precisely how these hierarchies are sustained through these ambivalent acts of graffiti and similar such inscriptions that the editors aptly call 'wild signs'.

Materiality

The area that these studies open is large. However, I would like to consider two important issues raised by these papers that have wider significance for how we might understand archaeological work more broadly and how we might conceive of material culture studies more generally. I am interested here in engaging with the particular affordances suggested by the materiality of graffiti, and the rhythms and scales of temporality in which graffiti and other 'wild signs' work. These are interesting not only in terms of how we might consider material culture studies more generally in terms of the dynamics of materiality and their social effects but also the role that archaeologists and heritage specialists might play in relation to what these material dynamics might suggest for archaeological practice and heritage more widely.

It is clear from the papers that graffiti and other such 'wild signs' though ephemeral have a powerful and dynamic material force. Putting its problematic status as 'art' or 'vandalism' aside, it is by definition associated with an individual author, a medieval pilgrim, an anti-fascist demonstrator, or an early twenty-first century tagger. It is an intervention that produces an inherently individual agency that is ambivalent, at times stabilizing in terms of dominant modes of power or inherently destabilising when it assumes the contested status of 'vandalism' and produces the 'vandal' subject as opposed to the 'pious' subject described by Owen in medieval England. Its reduction to this ambivalent and inherently individualising aspect is central to the force 'wild signs' represent.

With this emphasis on the individual, 'wild signs' as ephemeral and fleeting material interventions none the less represent a powerful means by which certain forms of embodiment are produced and in particular powerful attachments to place that challenge existing hierarchies. As Oliver and Neal note in their introduction 'wild signs' by virtue of their material qualities provide a view onto histories, people and places that stand in contrast with dominant discourses hence their 'wild' and destabilising nature. Its ephemerality and individuality is exactly what constitutes its power and thereby presents itself as an important phenomenon for inquiry within the social sciences and makes it an important subject for material culture studies.

The Materiality of 'Wild Signs'

Arborglyphs as discussed by Oliver and Neal and Mallea-Olaetxe offer an intriguing example of the significance of the material qualities of 'wild signs'. The surfaces of trees as Mallea-Olaetxe notes are almost as irresistible to carvers as for others have been the blank surfaces of walls. However these natural and growing surfaces are very dynamic. An inscribed arborglyph will expand and distort over time rendering it eventually incomprehensible. For a certain time frame dependant on the life of the tree the arborglyph is comprehensible and as Mallea-Olaetxe shows this helps create a specific landscape and community where these signs over generations and the life of the tree serve to create an affective community of immigrant Basque herders with strong emotional ties to their homeland sustained within an alien North American wilderness an ocean and continent away. A very novel and affective landscape and community emerges where herders from the same town would carve on the same tree to create an unusual hybridised point of identification between Basque hometown and Aspen tree trunk in the North American wilderness. As these arborglyphs recede, their ability to produce this community with its emotional ties subsides. They remain as a distended reminder eventually disappearing along with the community sustained within them succumbing to natural forces and economic changes. They and their affective communities become obliterated through these assemblages of natural forces of growth and social and economic processes – putting an end to a cycle of affective belonging.

The material matrices within which 'wild signs' emerge are well highlighted in these discussions and draw attention

to the significance of wider assemblages of institutions, sensorial dimensions and degrees of embodiment. Arborglyphs situated within 'wild' nature are inherently productive of the kinds of moral communities that sustained Basque herders, similarly the relative proximity of graffiti to the bodies of the individual producers and the wider performative and sensorial context is well illustrated in a number of other examples in this collection. McGuire with her Gritstone examples speaks to the means by which the materiality of engraved stone within the landscape, through its very inscrutability produces a distinct relationship between observer/wanderer and landscape that reproduces in visual and embodied form the historical hierarchies of social life and landscape.

Similarly, Owen shows how in medieval contexts the placement of graffiti not only functioned as a form of votive offering – a far cry from modern understandings of graffiti as vandalism – but was in fact an intervention and expression of profound piety. However, its location and its inscription within certain media: crudely carved individually into stone or wood within certain church spaces, was opposed to the prominent aristocratic placement of heraldry and similar such votive offerings. This produced a setting where not only individuals from all social backgrounds could claim an embodied connection to the divine, but similarly served as a means of subverting those social hierarchies, by their spontaneous nature and their tactical placement - inconspicuously within intimate church spaces effecting a pious embodied connection with the divine when other forms of material inscription available to the aristocracy are foreclosed to the wider community of medieval Christians.

Giles and Giles in their investigation of Yorkshire farm graffiti draw similar attention to the importance of context and scale for the sorts of social effects produced. Carvings in plaster readily prone to decay or marks in chalk and pencil function distinctly from more overt and materially durable inscriptions and speak to different audiences and at different scales. Bold gestures are legible from afar with different social effects such as producing a wider identification centred on the actions of the individual graffiti inscriber. Parno notes similarly in relation to graffiti in Bristol how time and spatiality are linked to produce audiences and different social engagements. As Parno notes, the more time it takes to produce a given work of graffiti the more likely it will take place in a secluded space - medium, space, audience and social effect are deeply implicated in the manner in which materially, spatially and temporally graffiti is produced

More emphatically Silva in his discussion of Lisbon and graffiti and as a practitioner himself draws direct attention to the social effects of graffiti's materiality and material context. Early anti-fascist graffiti were done in crude brush strokes with images suggestive of socialist realism. Rather than being seen as vandalism they are perceived as expressions of free speech and anti-fascist resistance. Often cork blackened with a lighter was used to create a crude marker with which to produce anti-fascist graffiti at almost any time and in any place albeit more ephemerally. But as we know from Shachter (2008) the durability of graffiti is often considered inconsequential for its affective power and in fact quite the opposite is true, graffiti must be able to be obscured and destroyed in order to be effective. Spontaneous anti-fascist expressions were very difficult to control – to such an extent that the possession of an ordinary piece of cork was enough to get youth arrested, making it virtually impossible to regulate such expressions through such a ubiquitous and ordinary medium like a cork. When the 80s and 90s came about, spray paint and alcohol markers emerged making for more technically sophisticated graffiti forms with a wide range of colours, easily and inexpensively – this was the time of 'true graffiti' according to Silva but with media that are more readily regulated than a piece of ordinary blackened cork. These new media could not be exploited with the same degree of spontaneity as blackened cork markers of the fascist period. Though less enduring, cork was more effective as a spontaneous and wide ranging medium for expressing resistance.

Silva also notes more precisely the significance of specific materialities and their affordances in regards to their social effects. Stencilling, is quick and readily done in some of the most visible locations (like blackened cork) thereby enabling a very thorough, fast and hard to control means by which to visually claim urban spaces amongst competing urban youth. Similarly the placement and formal qualities of graffiti figures serve to engage varying segments of the populations such as the larger more graphically bold and text-like images visible to passing motorcars, as opposed to the more elaborate and abstracted forms at closer, more intimate pedestrian range. Different audiences in different media and material contexts are engaged to produce different embodied and distinctive sensorial engagements and different degrees of engagement with the urban context.

These discussions lend particular support to Shachter's argument regarding the materiality of graffiti and its effects. Shachter notes how graffiti works as a form of distributed personhood pace Alfred Gell, where selfhood is literally distributed and augmented under the specific conditions that certain material forms and contexts enable. Shachter relies on a Lefebvre's critique of the rationality of modern spaces, which intentionally disembody individuals in order to produce abstracted rationalised and governable space. Graffiti directly challenges these disembodied forms of urban governance to produce a distinctly individual, embodied and widely distributed and embodied connection with urban spaces, which tagging, stencilling and other graffiti techniques enable, positing a different understanding of the urban landscape and challenge in the face of abstracted forms of disembodied governance.

Rhythm and Temporality

These discussions all raise the question of the significance of temporal cycles. Shachter clearly argues for the cyclical nature of graffiti – it is in fact meant to disappear and be buried under other graffiti or the whitewash of council cleaners – its enduring nature is not significant. This appears to challenge several of the papers here that call

for the preservation of graffiti. However, this apparent impasse suggests another direction in which to maybe conceive the social effects of graffiti and its implications for our understandings of the materiality of 'wild signs' and archaeological practise from both perspectives.

Shachter observes that the destruction of images is an indication of their power and affective success. Far from being evidence of vandalism, the overlaying of other images and even the purposively destructive tactics of local councils in England who paint over and destroy these images in order to purify urban spaces of an incursive and almost disease-like ungoverned visual culture, works in the opposite fashion to assure the power of the previous image. These images must be destroyed and new images created in order to assure the power of this form of visual and material engagement within the urban landscape. The destruction of images is an indication of their affective power; they provoked a response and therefore were successful by evidence of their destruction.

Shachter and other contributors of this volume however, point to the significance of the rhythmic and temporal flows that characterise these ephemeral practices particularly in the present day that are distinct from the votive offerings suggested by Owen in her contribution on medieval graffiti. The scales of creation and destruction and creation again, the palimpsests of images, the enduring nature of some forms over others dependant on their material context, be it plaster, Aspen bark or concrete along with the media used: blackened cork, alcohol marker, chalk, spray can or knife edged incision, etc. speak to distinctive and hybrid material intra-active contexts that produce particular kinds of often novel social engagements.

What becomes unusual then is the archaeological intervention within these cycles, which then tries to shut down or redirect these cycles through either preservation or documentation and thereby effecting 'heritage' and producing an archaeology of the recent past. As Schofield notes, the scheduling files of the Bunker at Bempton Radar Station make no mention of the graffiti or its interpretation. When discussing the Nevada Peace Camps, Schofield remarks how authorities and locals argue that 'nothing exists there' and that it is 'not archaeological'. Thus if it is not archaeological or undocumented, it does not merit funding and thereby warrant the institutionalised stoppage of these rhythmic flows through preservation and documentation into the wider temporalities and hierarchies that constitute an enduring 'heritage' or what might be used to constitute the voices and experiences of the otherwise dispossessed, disenfranchised and forgotten. Schofield describes how images are removed or destroyed: 'Someone has removed the pentagram at Bempton, someone has whitewashed and later defaced the graffiti in the tunnel of love, bar signs in Straight Street are being removed'; these images, through their affective power, illicit spontaneous and at times coordinated interventions. The stoppages within such flows range from the actions of individuals to those of local authorities. The efforts of archaeologists and heritage specialists engaged with the archaeology of the recent past then stand in a problematic position in relation to the flows and stoppages that graffiti might normally work in. However, one might argue that as the image according to Schachter demands to be destroyed, whitewashed, removed or painted over, it is precisely the dynamic power of graffiti that sustains its powerful social effects and that enable 'finding the ghosts of place' that Schofield describes. They facilitate the articulation of the dispossessed and disenfranchised through the further and seemingly 'disruptive' work of preservation and documentation that stops and alters these dynamic flows. These actions in turn serve to amplify the power of these 'wild signs' through their seemingly inhibitory effects to produce yet other and possibly more powerful extensions in new contexts and other realms of social life with wider consequences such as the creation of more inclusive histories and a more profound understanding of the heritage of the recent past that time and change conspire very quickly to obscure and thereby make us collectively less known to ourselves.

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